Religion and Philosophy of NALAYIRAM with Special Reference to NAMMALVAR

Dr. N. SUBBU REDDIAR
PROFESSOR AND HEAD
DEPARTMENT OF TAMIL

with a Foreword :

Dr. M. ANANTHASAYANAM AYYENGAR
EX-GOVERNOR OF BIHAR

SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY
TIRUPATI
1977

SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY

TAMIL DEPARTMENT PUBLICATION No. 4

General Editor :

Dr. N. SUBBU REDDIAR
Professor of Tamil

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF NĀLĀYIRA DIVYA PRABANDHAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAMMĀḺVĀR

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF NĀLĀYIRA DIVYA PRABANDHAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAMMĀḶVĀR

Dr. N. SUBBU REDDIAR
Professor and Head,
Department of Tamil

SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY
1977

First Edition - May, 1977

Copyrights with Sri Venkateswara University

Religion and Philosophy of Nālāyira Divya Prabandham with Special Reference to Nammāḷvār

by

Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar

Price: **Rs. 100-00**

COPIES: 265

PRINTED AT:
S.V. UNIVERSITY PRESS
TIRUPATI - 517 502 (A.P.)
SOUTH INDIA

DEDICATED

TO

THE SACRED MEMORY

OF

Dr. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

THE GREAT MODERN INTERPRETER

OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

FOREWORD

The author of this work Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar is a well-known Tamil Writer. He got a Department of Tamil founded in the Sri Venkateswara University at Tirupati and has been the Head of the Department for many years. He has recently been raised to the status of a Professor in the University and he richly deserves that position. He has written a number of works in Tamil on various subjects-scientific, technological and academic. His language is easy-flowing and mellifluous, understandable both by scholars and by laymen. He has contributed greatly to Tamil writing.

The present work of his is a unique one dealing as it does with the Āḷvārs. The Āḷvārs are Sri Vaiṣṇavite saints of South India who realised Godhead in His *arcā* form in the Vaiṣṇavite temples of South India. They are mystics of a very high order and sang of God in ecstasy and their verses number about 4000 which are called the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. The main Āḷvārs are ten in number who with the addition of two others viz. Āṇṭāḷ and Maturakavi constitute a dozen. They are drawn from all castes and they gave a great impetus to the spread of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. Their verses mostly relate to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa – the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu – besides the absolute Para-vāsudeva in Śri Vaikuṇṭha. Of all these Āḷvārs, Nammāḷvār is the foremost one though not the earliest. He is recognised as the patron-saint of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in southern India. His thousand verses are called *Tiruvāymoḷi Āyiram* as having emanated from his holy mouth. Before the singing of any of these songs, the *taṉiyaṉ* or the verse relating to the author is recited and his blessings are invoked. The *taṉiyaṉ* of Nammāḷvār describes him as one who rendered the *Vedas* into Tamil and that his thousand verses have all the sanctity and the authority of the *Vedas*.

Referring to the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, Śrī Vedantha Deśika states that they throw considerable light on a number of intricate and difficult passages in the *Vedas* and help to clarify many doubts therein; and the *Teṉkalais* have given greater authority to the Tamil *Prabandhams* than even to the *Vedas* themselves. Nammāḷvār's hymns are considered to be the authority on Śrī Vaiṣṇavism by both the sects of Śrī

Vaiṣṇavism. These *Prabandhams* are recited during all the temple festivals and have even been made a part of the daily worship both in Śrī Vaiṣṇavite temples and houses of the Vaiṣṇavites. Śrī Vaiṣṇavites must feel greatly indebted to Prof. N. Subbū Reddiar for the deep study and thought he has bestowed on the *Prabandhams;* he has written on the religion and philosophy of the Āḻvārs in his fine English style, thus carrying the message of the Āḻvārs to the very doors of Vaiṣṇavites and non-Vaiṣṇavites alike. The task is stupendous and though Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar is a born saivite, he has taken a deep interest in the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite literature and written on it with great sympathy, love and admiration much better than even a born Vaiṣṇavite can do. In this his great work which can be called his *magnum opus*, he has traced the history of Vaisnavite religion from time of the *Ṛg Veda*.

He has considered the subject under six sections. The first contains his introduction summarising the work. The second relates to the pre-Āḻvār period starting from the *Vedas*. The third is a prefatory study of the work of *Nālāyiram*. In section four, he discusses the main theme of the work relating to religion and philosophy of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* with special reference to Nammāḻvār. The fifth refers to post-Āḻvār period and the sixth gives his conclusion. His summary is in sufficient detail to convey a comprehensive idea of his great work in his own language. In the second section, there is nothing controversial in the subject matter but with regard to Vaiṣṇavism during the pre-Āḻvār period, there may be a difference of opinion regarding his observations. It is true that the *Vedic* scholars of the West have described Viṣṇu as a minor deity during the *Vedic* period and to some extent he has reproduced their views. The *Ṛg Veda* is the earliest *Veda* and the one on which the other *Vedas* and later religious literatures are based. It contains a large number of hymns addressed to various natural elements whose aid and blessing the *Vedic* Aryans invoked by praise and prayer and by offering ablations and libations to them. But Viṣṇu as He emerges in the *Ṛg Veda* is a personal God. The accepted essential feature of all theistic religions is the

existence of a personal God who created the universe. Such attributes like the creator, protector and sustainer are used in the *Ṛg Veda* only with regard to Viṣṇu. It is also specifically mentioned therein that He created even the Sun and Varuṇa and that others followed Him and that He grew from a primeval germ into the cosmos. After having created the worlds, fixed his lasting abode for himself a *Paramapadam* or Heaven which ordinary mortals may not be able to see or reach easily and which place is full of sweetness and bliss. *Ṛg Veda* also refers to His consort Śrī Mahālakṣmī. It states that His worship is easy and the repetition of His name is enough. It also refers to His incarnations.

Thus it appears that the essential features of Vaiṣṇavism were known to the *Ṛg Vedic* Aryans and they worshipped Him as the Supreme Being. The divine qualities of Viṣṇu were enhanced late by the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Purāṇas* in the North and by the Āḷvārs in the South and these laid the foundation for the systematisation of Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion by Śrī Rāmānuja.

Coming to the central theme of the discourse of Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar in this volume, all the essential elements of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, as practised and preached today, have been elaborated by him with special reference to the Āḷvār saints. Briefly they are as follows: that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Being; that He is the creator; that His abode is the highest in the universe; that He is both transcendent in Heaven and immanent in the Universe; that for the devotees, He took the *Vibhava* form as Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa and that to make Himself easily available to all for worship, He has taken the *arcā* or permanent incarnation in temples. Their conception of the relationship of the individual soul to God is one of *Nāyaka-Nāyaki bhāva* – that is between a lover and his beloved. Nammāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaimannaṉ have emphasised this *Madhura-bhāva* and sung in ecstasy and longed to become one with the divine being. In many passages their description shows how the separation from the Lord is unbearable to them. They appeal to Śrī Mahālakṣmī to recommend them to the Lord's Grace to perform *puruṣahāra*. They haye developed

sakti and more than that *prapatti* or *saranāgati*, the doctrine of surrender, as the means of attaining Godhead. They knew God and realized Him and became one with Him. It is said that after reciting his ten verses, Śrī Tiruppāṇāḷvār, a harijan saint lost himself in ecstasy and his soul merged into that of Śrī Raṅganātha. The thousand verses of Nammāḷvār called *Tiruvāymoḷi*, are treated as sacred. They contain the essence of the *Sāma-veda* and particularly, that of *Chandogya Upaniṣad* which work is largely drawn upon for describing the creation in the *Brahma-sūtras* by the Bādarāyana to establish the existence of God, His attributes and the mode of reaching Him. *Tatva-traya* which is the distinguishing feature of Śrī Vaiṣṇavite philosophy is also referred to by Nammāḷvār. The emphasis of all the *Prabandhams* particularly of Nammāḷvār is laid on true knowledge which is described as one, which finds the universe as the body of a universal consciousness or soul of which body all beings are limbs. It implies that there is only one thing in the world and that is God. In fact, he found God in everything in the universe.

Lastly *Saranāgati* or self-surrender as the means of attaining salvation and release from the cycle of births and deaths is described wonderfully by every one of the Āḷvārs, and Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar has quoted chapter and verse from the original text in support of his conclusion. I admire his great talents and his inexhaustible energy and industry in gathering the material which has spread over millenia and brought the essence of all the texts in the compass of a single work.

I pray to Lord Venkateswara that He may grant him a hundred years of life to serve the cause of the Tamil language, religion and philosophy in an ever-increasing measure. The greatest tribute that can be paid to Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar for his glorious work is to keep his book in every library and in every home and to read and digest it. I most heartily congratulate him on his glorious work and wish his enterprise all success.

TIRUPATI,
February 15, 1977.

M. Ananthasayanam Ayyengar
EX-GOVERNOR OF BIHAR

PREFACE

This book is a fruit of my study of the compositions of the Āḻvārs from the Religious and Philosophical points of view in the main and occasionally from the literary viewpoint. A fairly thorough critical study is offered in the following pages of the hymns on the strength of work done over a period of five years.

The focus of the study is on Nammāḻvār's poems, for he is the most well-known amongst the Āḻvārs and held as the leading exponent of Vaiṣṇavism through Tamil and as the head of all those who have been following him representing Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Āḻvār period. However, the compositions of the other Āḻvārs and the contributions made by them to the cause of Vaiṣṇvism have also been taken into consideration for purpose of nothing similarly in treatment to that of Nammāḻvār and for separately mentioning their contributions whichever are individualistic and unique in their nature.

Although a critical study of the commentaries and criticisms upon these compositions is not within the framework of the present study, the expositions of the later Ācāryas including their commentaries are utilised mainly for clarifying the interpretation of certain typical passages and problems of religious significance. A general, but brief, account of some of the well-known commentaries is given in a separate chapter (Section V, Chapter XXXI).

Schools of thought in India and elsewhere have been mostly maintaining Religion and Philosophy as independent branches However, Indian philosophy has been theistic from the earliest times with the exception of the schools of Absolutism. The concept of a personal deity is involved in this co-ordinated development of religion and philosophy, the principles of which have coalesced rendering impossible a treatment of one in a manner independent of the other. Works which are brought under the subject of philosophy proper do not question the foundations of religious experience and can be admitted to tacitly lend support to the validity of the religious experiences. Works like the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and

also *Agamas* which are written in Sanskrit and the compositions of the Āḻvārs which are in Tamil are religious in nature and content. They presuppose the authority of the philosophical foundations on which they are based and on which they are the solid super-structures built at various periods. There is thus no room for a discussion as to the exclusive nature of treatment philosophical or religious of the problems dealt with in these compositions.

A study of the religious and philosophical contributions made by the Āḻvārs cannot be undertaken without reference to the materials which are available in cognate sources. To free such materials from the scope of this study would lead to the understanding of these compositions as the rise of thoughts newly invented by the Āḻvārs without any traditional background and so not capable of accounting for the popularity at the hands of those who have been steeped in age-long traditional lores. An attempt is therefore made here to classify the results of the study on this subject under sections which represent the beginnings of the religious tradition which inspired the writing of these compositions, a general account of the Āḻvārs and their compositions, then an intensive study of Nammāḻvār's compositions, the influence of these compositions on the development of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in the subsequent periods and a conclusion on the worth of these compositions.

The study is divided into six sections the first of which forms an Introduction dealing with the Āḻvārs' approach to Reality. The second section is devoted to proving that the cult of Viṣṇu is as ancient as the *Vedas* themselves are. The theistic, personal and *saguna* aspects of the deity are traceable to the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and the *Bhagavad-gitā*. The various forms which the Lord takes for the welfare of humanity are found better developed in the *Āgamas*, their beginnings being indicated in the other earlier sources. Practical code of conduct of a Vaiṣṇavite gets treatment in the *Dharmaśāstras* in addition to the sources mentioned above. Some of the aspects of the deity are also suggested and described also in the ancient Tamil classical literature. This section serves as a preparatory chapter to the thesis.

The questton of the period of the Āḷvars is taken up in the third section where the literary, epigraphical and other materials are brought forward to fix the dates of the Āḷvārs with an approximate degree of certainty. The dispute regarding the actual number of verses and the order in which the compositions of these Āḷvārs are to follow are discussed in the same section which also contains a brief literary appreciation of these compositions. The traditional conclusions on some of the matters treated in this section have been shown to be inadmissible in the light of the materials that are available of late. This section serves as a useful background for a deep study of the compositions of the Āḷvārs.

The fourth section is the biggest with fourteen chapters dealing with several aspects of the *Nālāyiram*. The general approaeh of the Āḷvārs is treated at the outset. The preminence of Nārāyaṇa, His perfections, forms, exploits and His relationship to the self and the world take up the next four chapters. God is shown to be both immanent and transcendent and the inner-controller of one and all not excluding Brahmā and Rudra. Mystic experience which varies among the devout men belonging to the various faiths of the world finds its presentation in the form of Nature and Bridal Love. The former is not to be mistaken for pantheism since it implies God's transcendence also. The latter, though it could be traced to the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, finds a full and rich depiction only at the hands of the Āḷvārs. The reason for this lies in the aesthetic appreciation of God with particular reference to His descent as Kṛṣṇa and the *arcā* forms. The available sources have been fully utilised in this study of this aspect of love. Apart from devotion which functions ordinarily not at the mystic level but which draws man closer to the deity, the spirit of service which man owes to his deity as an act of obligation gets treatment and is shown to attain its perfection in rendering service to the *bhāgavatas*. The rich blissful experience which a devotee is allowed to have by the deity here within the limitations of the material world is openly proved as obtainable even in the state of release. This aspect does not receive this much of explicit support in the sources which are said to belong to the earliest period of literary development.

of eulogizing the *bhāgavata* cult than what is actually needed to understand the spirit and tenor of the Āḷvars. The anecedotes which find room often times in these commentaries cloud much of the main issue which are involved in the interpretation of the original text.

The last section shows that the doctrine of self-surrender though not unknown in the period before the Āḷvārs got a direct advocacy in the composition of the Āḷvārs and finding room in the spiritual training became one of the cardinal tenets of the post-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇavism. It is no exaggeration to state emphatically that through Rāmānuja who gave importance to the path of devotion keeping those of *karma* and *jñāna* at just below its level on account of the influence borne on him by the teachings of the Āḷvārs[3] that the devotional aspect, the mystic ideal of Nature and Bride, the spirit of service to God and His men which characterise any religious faith permeated the theistic schools of later Vaiṣṇavism such as those of Maḍhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha and others. A study of these compositions in comparison to that of these later schools of Vaiṣṇavism would have pertinence to a study undertaken on the development of *bhakti* according to Rāmānuja and so is not attempted here as it lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

The materials on which this study is based as also a table showing the method of transliteration adopted are given separately before the thesis proper. The appendicies which are eight in number contain information on the list of *Brahma Vidyas*, the order of enumerating the Āḷvārs, and the anecdotes referrred to by the Āḷvārs but not traceable to any known source. A list is given on the number of verses composed by Nammāḷvār on the *arcā* forms of God enshrined in various temples. Another list here contains the number of shrines exclusively celebrated by some Āḷvārs. The list of succession of the Vaiṣṇavits ācāryas is also given for the understanding of the two traditions of the post-Rāmānuja school. A table setting out the dates of the Āḷvārs acceptable to the traditionalists also forms a separate appendix.

The work was originally submitted as a doctoral Thesis to Sri Venkateswara University. I heartily acknowledge the able guidance provided for the work by Dr. V. Varadachari, then Reader in Ṣanskrit Department of the University and now Professor Emeritus in the Department. But for his unstinting help and meticulous supervision the work could not have been taken shape as it has.

My thanks to Dr. S. Viswanathan of the Department of English for going through the manuscript and offering useful suggestions.

I owe the publication of the work in book form to the University Grants Commission and to the Government of Tamil Nadu whose generous grants have made it possible. I record my keen appreciation of the scrupulous care with which the printing and get-up of the book have been attended to by the S.V. University Press.

I place on record my gratefulness to Sri M. Ananta-sayanam Ayyengar, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha and ex-Governor of Bihar, for graciously consenting to write a Foreword to this volume. It is the volume's privilege to have an introductory word from this distinguished son of India who is an uncompromising votary of Indian Culture and the premier citizen of the holy city of Tirupati.

As a humble gesture to appreciation and regard, I dedicate this volume to late lamented Bharata Ratna Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who did more than any one to acquaint the West with the true essence of Indian thought.

TIRUPATI – 517 502
5 June 1977

N. SUBBU REDDIAR

THE MATERIALS ON WHICH THIS STUDY IS BASED

1. Nālāyira Divya Prabhandham (Text in 4 Volumes: Vol. I (1955); Vol. II, III, IV (1956) Murray & Co., 5, Thambu Chetti Street, Madras-1).

2. Bhagavad Viṣayam (in 10 Volumes) (Ed.): S. Krishnamachariar Madras (1925).

   This work consists of:

   (a) Six Thousand by Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ

   (b) Nine Thousand by Nañcīyar

   (c) Twelve Thousand by Vātikeśari Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar

   (d) Twenty-four Thousand by Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai

   (e) Thirty-six Thousand by Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai

   (f) Arumpatam by Kuṇakarampākkam Rāmānuja Jīyar

   (g) Drāmidōpaniṣad-sāram by Vedānta Deśika

   (h) Drāmidōpaniṣad-tātparyaratnāvali by Vedānta Deśika

   (i) Drāmidōpanishad-saṅgati by Vātikeśari Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar

   (j) Tiruvāymoḻi-nūṟṟantāti by Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ

3. Annangaracharya P.B.: Divyārtta Dīpikai on Nālāyiram (Kanchipuram, Madras).

4. Tirukkōnēri Dāsyai: Tiruvāymoḻi Vācakamālai (Ed.): Devanathacharyar (Thañjavūr Saraswathi Mahāl Library, 1952).

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

A.G.P.	Ārāyirap-paṭi Guruparamparā
A.H.	Ācārya Hṛdayam
Ahir. S.	Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā
Ait. Br.	Aitareya Brāhmana
Ait. Up.	Aitareya Upanishad
AKN.	Akanāṉūṟu
AL. ST.	Āḷavantār Śtotram
A.P.	Amalaṉātipirāṉ
Anan. S.	Ānanda Saṁhitā
A.V.	Atharva Veda
Atri. S.	Atri Saṁhitā
B.D.S.	Boudhāyana Dharma-sūtra
Bhāg. P.	Bhāgavata Purāṇa
Bhag. Vis.	Bhagavad-Viṣayam
Bhār. S.	Bhāradvāja Saṁhitā
Bh. G.	Bhagavad-gītā
Bh. G. B.	Bhagavad-gītā Bhāṣya
Bhr. S.	Bhṛgu Saṁhitā
Br. B. S.	Bṛhadbrahma Saṁhitā
Br. Up.	Bṛhad Āranyaka Upaniṣad
C. TML.	Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal
Ch. Up.	Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad
CLP.	Cilappatikāram
D.Sm.	Dakṣa Smṛti
D.S.C.	Divyasūri Caritai
G.P.	Guruparamparā
Gar. P.	Garuḍa Purāṇa
Git. San.	Gītārtha Saṅgraha
H.G.S.	Hiraṇyagarbha Saṁhitā
H.V.	Harivamśam
I.Tv.	Īraṇṭām Tiruvantāti
Īś. S.	Īśvara Saṁhitā
Īś. Up.	Īśa Upaniṣad
Iti. Sam.	Itihāsa Samuccaya
Jaim. Up. Br.	Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
Jay. S.	Jayākhya Saṁhitā
Kath. Up.	Katha Upaniṣad
Kau. Up.	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
K.C.	Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu
Ken. Up.	Kena Upaniṣad

KLT.	Kalittokai
K.R.	Kamparāmāyaṇam
KRN	Kuṟuntokai
Kur. P.	Kūrma Purāṇa
L.T.	Lakṣmī Tantram
M.Sm.	Manusmṛti
M.Tv.	Mutal Tiruvantāti
Mahan. Up.	Mahānārāyanīya Upaniṣad
Mai. Up.	Maitri Upaniṣad
Mān. Up.	Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad
Mar. S.	Marīci Saṁhitā
M. Bh.	Mahābhārata
MLP	Mullaip-pāṭṭu
MNM	Maṇimēkalai
MTK	Maturaik-kāñci
Mu. Tv.	Mūṉṟām Tiruvantāti
Mun. Up.	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
Nars. Up.	Narasimha Upaniṣad
Nāc. Tm.	Nācciyar Tirumoḻi
Nāṉ. Tv.	Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti
Nār. Kal.	Nāradīya Kalpa
Nār. P.	Nāradīya Purāṇa
Nār. S.	Naradīya Saṁhitā
Nār. Up.	Nāradīya Upaniṣad
Nārṇ. Up.	Nārāyaṇīya Upaniṣad
N.B.S.	Nārada Bhakti-sūtra
N.P.R.	Nārada Pāñcarātra
NRR.	Naṟṟiṇai
P.TML.	Periya Tirumaṭal
P.Tv.	Periya Tiruvantāti
Pad. P.	Padma Purāṇa
Pād. S.	Pādma Saṁhitā
Padm. P.	Padmōttara Purāṇa
Pan. Br.	Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa
Par. S.	Parama Saṁhitā
P.P.S.	Paramapuruṣa Saṁhitā
Pārames. S.	Pārameśvara Saṁhitā
PRP.	Paripāṭal
Pau. S.	Pauṣkara Saṁhitā
Peri. Tm.	Periya Tirumoḻi
P.T.A.	Periya Tirumuṭi Aṭaivu
Periyal. Tm.	Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi
Perum. Tm.	Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi

P.P.	Periya Purāṇam
PRMP.	Perumpāṇāṟṟup-paṭai
PRN	Puranāṉūṟu
Pr. Up.	Prasna Upanisad
Ram.	Rāmāyaṇam
R.N.	Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti
R.T.S.	Rahasyatrayasāra
R.V.	Rg. Veda
S.V.	Sāma Veda
Sand. S.	Sāṇḍilya Saṁhitā
S.B.S.	Sāṇḍilya Bhakti-sūtra
Sat. Br.	Satapātha Brāhmaṇa
Sātt. S.	Sāttvata Saṁhitā
Sau. S.	Saunaka Saṁhitā
S.G.	Saraṇāgati Gadya
Śrīdh. S.	Śrīdhara Saṁhitā
Śrī Pras. S.	Śrī Praśna Saṁhitā
S.V.P.	Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam
Sv. Up.	Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad
Taitt. Ar.	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
Taitt. Br.	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
Taitt. S.	Taittirīya Saṁhitā
Taitt. Up.	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
T.P.	Tecikap-pirapantam
Tc. V.	Tiruccanta Viruttam
T.K.	Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam
T.M.	Tirumālai
TLK	Tolkāppiyam
TMR.	Tirumuṟai
TMRP.	Tirumurukāṟṟup-paṭai
T.N.	Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam
T.P.L.	Tiruppallāṇṭu
T.E.	Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucci
T.Pv.	Tiruppāvai
T.V.K.	Tiruvācakam
T.V.C.	Tiruvāciriyam
T.V.M.	Tiruvāymoḻi
T.V.L.K.	Tiruveḻukkūṟṟirukkai
T.V.R.	Tiruviruttam
TLK.	Tolkāppiyam
Upen. S.	Upendra Saṁhitā
U.R.M.	Upatēcaratnamālai
Vām. P.	Vāmana Purāṇam

Var. P.	Varāha Purāṇa
Vay. P.	Vāyu Purāṇa
V.S.	Vedānta Sūtras
Vim. Kal.	Vimānārcana Kalpa
V. Dh.	Viṣṇu Dharmam
V.P.	Viṣṇu Purāṇa
V.R.S.	Viṣṇurahasya Saṁhitā
V.T.	Viṣṇu Tantram
Vis. S.	Viśvaksena Saṁhitā

METHOD OF CITING AUTHORITIES

The numbers given in the footnotes, when citing authorities, refer to the verses or lines or pages as indicated below:

(1) The number following the title indicates the number of the verse. e.g. M.Tv. 59 means *Mutal Tiruvantāti*, verse 59; T.Pv 28 means *Tirup. pāvai*, verse 28 and so on.

(2) When two numbers are used, the first number denotes the hymn or chapter (adhyāya, praśna. valli, anuvāka, khāṇḍa etc.) or kaṭai and the second one, the verse or line in it. e.g. Tol. 3: 45 means *Tolkappi-yam*, Book 3, cuttiram 45; Perum. Tm. 8: 6 means *Perumal Tirumoli*, Hymn 8, verse 6; Sv. Up. 5: 13 means *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. fifth adhyāya, verse 13; PRN. 23: 1 3 means *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, verse 23, line 3, and so on.

(3) When three numbers are used, the first denotes the work, the *Tirumoḷi* or *Tirumuṟai*, the second the hymn, and the third the verse. e.g. T.V.M. 6.9: 7 means *Tiruvāymoḷi* 6, hymn 9, and verse 7; mere number such as 7.96: 9 means *Tirumurai* 7, hymn 96, verse 9; Ch. Up. 3.14: 2 means *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad*, third prapāṭhaka, fourteenth khāṇḍa verse 2; CLP. 3.22; ll 42-48 means *Cilapatikāram*, kantam 3, katai 22, lines 42 to 48 and so on.

(4) In the case of other books of commentary or of scholarship, the number refers to the page or pages and is preceded by p or pp.

(5) Wherever words or phrases are quoted from the texts, their transliterated forms are indicated by double marks of quotation, and the translated version of the same by single marks of quotation. In all other cases, the diacritical marks alone easily distinguish them as transliterated words or phrases. Wherever translated versions alone are given, they are denoted by double marks of quotation.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

அ	a	உ	u	ஐ	ai
ஆ	ā	ஊ	ū	ஒ	o
இ	i	எ	e	ஓ	ō
ஈ	ī	ஏ	ē	ஔ	au
		ஃ	$\underline{K}$		

க்	k	த்	t	ல்	l
ங்	ṅ	ந்	n	வ்	v
ச்	c	ப்	p	ழ்	ḻ
ஞ்	ñ	ம்	m	ள்	ḷ
ட்	ṭ	ய்	y	ற்	ṟ
ண்	ṇ	ர்	r	ன்	ṉ

ஜ்	j	ஸ்	s	ஹ்	h
ஶ்	s	ஷ்	ṣ	க்ஷ்	kṣ

CONTENTS

		Page No.
Foreword	...	i
Preface	...	v
The Materials on which this study is based	...	xi
List of Abbreviations	...	xiii
Method of Citing Authorities	...	xvii
Transliteration Table	...	xix
Contents	...	xxi
Section I : *Introduction* (Summary)	...	1
Chapter I : Introduction	...	3
Section II : *Pre–Āḷvār Period* (Summary)	...	19
Chapter II : Viṣṇu in Vedic Literature	...	23
Chapter III : Conception of God in Itihāsas and Purāṇas	...	39
Chapter IV : The Supreme Being in the Bhagavadgītā	...	77
Chapter V : Godhead in the Āgamas and in Ritual Worship	...	94
Chapter VI : The Concept of Bhakti in Ancient Lore	...	122
Chapter VII : Viṣṇu Cult in the Early Tamil Literature	...	139
Chapter VIII : Tenets of Vaiṣṇavism	...	152
Section III : *A Prefatory Study of the Nālāyiram* (Summary)	...	171
Chapter IX : The Age of the Āḷvārs	...	173
Chapter X : The Numerology of Nālāyiram	...	195
Chapter XI : The Compositions of Āḷvārs (I)	...	215
Chapter XII : The Compositions of Āḷvārs (II)	...	247

Section IV : *Vaiṣṇavite Religion and Philosophy in the Nālāyiram* (Summary) ... 263

CHAPTER XIII : The General Approach of the Āḻvārs ... 272

CHAPTER XIV : The Godhead ... 277

CHAPTER XV : The Attributes of the Divine ... 285

CHAPTER XVI : The Forms and Exploits of Nārāyaṇa ... 307

CHAPTER XVII : Interrelations of God, Self and World 345

CHAPTER XVIII : The Ecstasy of the Aḻvars' God-experience 371

CHAPTER XIX : Nature Mysticism ... 419

CHAPTER XX : Bridal Mysticism ... 442

CHAPTER XXI : The Worship of the Deity ... 484

CHAPTER XXII : The Cult of Bhāgavatas ... 553

CHAPTER XXIII : The Ultimate Goal ... 579

CHAPTER XXIV : Contribution of Āḻvārs other than Nammāḻvār .. 622

CHAPTER XXV : The Āḻvārs and the World .. 673

CHAPTER XXVI : The Nālāyiram as Drāvida Veda .. 680

Section V : *Post–Āḻvār Period* (Summary) ... 695

CHAPTER XXVII : Nathamuni to Rāmānuja .. 699

CHAPTER XXVIII : Rāmānuja and the Nālāyiram 719

CHAPTER XXIX : The Āḻvārs and the Followers of Rāmānuja .. 737

CHAPTER XXX : The Āḻvārs and the Rāmānuja School of Vaiṣṇavism ... 796

CHAPTER XXXI : The Commentaries on the Nālāyiram ... 817

Section VI : *Conclusion* (Summary) ... 849

CHAPTER XXXII : Conclusion ... 851

Appendices

I. List of Brahma Vidyas ... 879

II. List of Āḷvārs mentioned in Several Vaiṣṇavite Literature ... 883

III. Incidents recorded by the Āḷvārs, but not found in Itihāsas and Purāṇas ... 887

IV. Nammāḷvār's Verses on the Arcā Form of God ... 891

V. List of Shrines celebrated exclusively by Pūtattāḷvār, Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār, Kulacekarāḷvār, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, Periyāḷvār and Nammāḷvār ... 893

VI. List of Succession of Vaiṣṇavite Ācaryas of two Schools ... 897

VII. Dates of the Āḷvārs ... 899

VIII. Bibliography ... 901

IX. Index ... 917

ERRATA

(N.B.: The following list consists of only such corrections as are important. Minor corrections which the reader can correct for himself are omitted.)

Page	*Line*	*Read*
12	25	*and* the result
13	21	rites
20	16	of the self
20	17	do its duty
22	17	temple, and features
25	18	devotion
34	12	realizable
57	10	Vajapeya
88	11	teaches
129	27	conviction
161	3	*Puruṣa-sūkta*
168	10	*sālagramā*
177	6	fondling
217	16	and
231–32	1	*āciriyappā*
254 (Foot-Note)	2	*Tolkāppiyam*
254 -do-	9	*Nilaimaṇṭila*
289	1	the
300 (Foot-Note)	1	*Tamilākkam*
309	25	destroyer
311	26	tutelary
313	5	Pradyumna
324	11	permanent

Page	*Line*	*Read*
324	17	ever-present
334	13	vouchsafed
343	17	was once
343	24	Garuḍa and
343	26	struck
349	10	accompany
350	5	standards of
350	16	is entitled
358	27	himself
359	16	his
365	24	his
365	last	(omit) who
394	18	through
421	12	god
447	13	mind of
467	4	love
470	14	remedy
473	76	flash
531	27	*antamilaṭimai*
532	15	objects of
553	6	wise men
555	5	bereft
555	13	time with those who
560	2	ascetics
560	23	reverentially
560	33	emphasizing mental aspect
561	9	When
565	29	hymn

Page	*Line*	*Read*
584	16	place is
585	23	because He is Himself
597	23	Fish-emblem
598	22	stage
598	23	graduated
607	17	God
613	28	lessens
618	10	physical
662	28	yield
665	10	from
676	20	draws
685	17	*Periya–*
692	1, 2	that......necessary (omit)
701	13	Rajagopala
706	4	disciples
710	21	doctrines
713	11	Tirumālai, Mālādhara
718	1	justified
781	7	matters
789	15	rigorously
797	32	Siddha
814	8	*Śrī*
816	30	from
820	22	Periya–parakālaśvāmin
858	26	conscious
866	1	disturbed thereafter.

SUMMARY

The idea of God is innate in man. Some are fortunate to have the realization of God and very often they pass through various stages beginning from rigid self-training and culminating in divine communion. The *avatāra* of the released selves as Āḻvārs could be justified with reference to these stages of God-realization. The inexpressible ultimate Reality finds in the selves a kind of articulation however inadequate it could be for giving a full description of Godhead. The Āḻvārs, leaving aside the ontological, and epistemological approaches for the study of God, make the aesthetic approach, and their attempt represents the continuation of the Upaniṣadic description of God. The compositions of the Āḻvārs have therefore a greater appeal to the human mind.

Introduction

India has been a secular state since she gained independence in 1947. It has been so declared in the Indian Constitution which came into force on the 26th January, 1950. This declaration was made to suit the conveniences of administering a land peopled by inhabitants who profess faiths which are other than the indigenous Hinduism. Nevertheless, the fact remains there that religion is the warp and woof of the Hindu society. It has been so for millennia. The stability of the Hindu society down to the present day notwithstanding the impact on it of foreign faiths, the uninterrupted enlightened attitude towards ultimate Reality and a real, enduring earnestness in the cause of peace characterize the Hindu society and this is not a little due to the religious influence on the people. It was Alexis Carrel that remarked: "Religion brings to man an inner strength, spiritual light, ineffable peace".

A society needs economic development without which it will be subjected to the militant power of other societies. The economic stability may make it grow stronger with the further development of material welfare. Without the guidance for chalking out the correct path in its policies, the society may acquire an aggressive attitude and as such it needs some direction in the right path. Religion performs this function in a society, by keeping the economic power under proper control without undermining it. The Latin proverb says, 'A man without religion is like a beast without bridle'. What applies to an individual is applicable, with equal felicity, to a society and a nation which is constituted by many individuals who impart strength to the individuality of the nation by their just behaviour. Irreligion or anti-religion is practised by a minority in a nation whose expectations are not fulfilled by the preach-

ings of that religion which they follow and so turn against their own religion out of sheer frustration. Treating the origin and development of irreligion, which is, of course, very ancient, is out of context when the religious attitudes, backed by philosophical inquiry, should engage the attention and study of a research worker.

The word 'religion' is made up of two parts, namely, 're' and 'ligion' which mean respectively 'again' and 'binding'. The word when thus derived can be taken to mean that man who is finite is part of the infinite from which he got separated. When it is said that he formed part of the infinite, what is meant is that he existed formerly in close union with the infinite. On account of his deeds he had to come away from it and hence the suffering is all the more severe. Even in bondage he is not really far away from the infinite, but owing to *karma* he feels the separation very keenly such that by practising the religious acts he could get at the Divine. The basis for this kind of feeling is only the desire to get bound or tied again to the infinite. The feeling that the finite is separated from the Divine and is not in a position to have direct communion because of the limitations which are set by the physical frame and material surroundings creates in man a conviction that he had committed a sin on account of which he could not be with God. The acts of sin committed now and then by force of circumstances do affect man. The pious men and the saints do not commit sin; but yet feel that they are sinners. They declare at times that they are the repositories of sins and are at the head of the host of sinners.[1] Thus it is not the committing of sins that makes these pious selves get themselves filled with remorse, but the feeling of having committed the sinful acts that makes them give expression to their having sinned. This is called *naicyānusandhāna* a mere declaration that they are sinners. Any act of unfaithfulness which they are forced to commit creates in them a more serious sense of sinfulness than in the case of an ordinary person who commits it.[2] This is the reason why such men are not able to bear sepa-

1 *Stotra-ratnam* 23; cf. T.V.M. 4.7.1,3,9; ibid. 5.7.1,2.

2 *The Essentials of Theism*, p. 148.

ration from the deity, while an ordinary man, who though attracted by divine perfection, is not much worried by the lack of opportunities of having God-vision. While in the case of the latter, the thought of God does engage a little of his time, in the case of the former matters other than those of the Divine get insignificant attraction.

The idea of God is innate in man. It is not actually acquired by education or any training spiritual or otherwise. People who could be condemned as very low and uncivilised believe in God. The very lowest Australian bushfolk-the most barbarous perhaps of barbarous creatures - believe in the existence of a supreme being who is a moral law-giver and judge. They even call him 'Father' and worship him in the character of an elderly gentleman. Savages are rarely athiests like us 'they entertain the larger hope'[3]. To have the idea of God is however different from having religious sense.

Sentimental minds are easily affected by beautiful expressions and enchanting music during religious worship. Such affections may reveal themselves in the form of external manifestations such as the gush of the tears of joy, change of voice choked with tears and others. Both those who are subjected to these experiences and who witness them are likely to take these manifestations as religious experiences.[4] However, even the non-believers in the existence of God get, on occasions like these, such emotional experiences, but this need not be wholly applied to all cases, as there are cases of genuine devotees who are to be marked out to be as such with much diligence. However. their experiences could not serve to guide others who are yet to enter the realms of God-realization. People of this kind could form the group of persons who require others' guidance in the matter of spiritual experiences and are better placed than others, for sympathetically responding to the religious content of the appeals made by men of devout faith.

---

3. *What is Civilization?* p. 88.
4. cf *The Essentials of Theism*, p. 7.

The development of religious consciousness is not a sudden phenomenon. A rather unromantic and deep study of God and His existence is required to be made by the aspirants to spiritual experiences. This will have to be undertaken, not in temples where the din and pomp of festivities easily attract all kinds of persons, but in secluded spots where the earnest aspirant could be in the least affected by the elements of temptation. Such cultivation of a disciplined life ensures at the right time which would be at any time near or distant the budding of the religious experience. This process could rather be likened to the flowering of plants which requires definite lapses of times varying according to the nature of the plant since the seeds were sown for their growth.[5] This could be taken to represent the procedure of *karma*, *jñāna*, and *yoga* which should, as matters of events, follow one after another. However, this may not universally hold good. Man has, at the time of his birth, some residues of previous lives. The achievements in those lives, if any, could possibly change this order with the result that while some are destined to take only to the path of *karma*, others are endowed, at the time of birth, with sufficient knowledge of ultimate truth that they are not required to do all the deeds. Yet, others, like a *yogin* in trance, indulge in thoughts about the divine.

Men, whether they pass through these stages or suddenly enter into the portals of God-realization, are not at all competent to guide the destinies of people through their religious experiences. Very few alone among them would have had the direct vision of God. The finitude of humanity cannot by any means gauge the perfection of the divine. It is left to the infinite Being to choose the occasion and reveal Itself to the aspirant and endow him with the necessary equipment for enjoying communion with Him.[6] All the same, it is not every God-chosen man that could himself express to others his experience with God. With all the wealth of attainments for the same, the person may not be able to commuicate his experience to others. Some could do this through an artless

5. cf. ibid., p. 7.
6. Kaṭh. Up 2: 23.

talk. Only very few may be able to give expression to their experiences in well-chosen words of enduring appeal. Infinity of God is so inexhaustible that even the most well-equipped God-intoxicated poet cannot adequately speak about God.[7]

The fortunate selves, who were chosen by God and who had gone to enjoy spiritual communion of non-earthly kind after leaving their mortal coil, are endowed with faultless knowledge of God and His attributes. They have capacities to have enjoyment of bliss *(ānanda)* and as such are better equipped than others to speak of communion with God. It is this fact that suggests of what would have formed the basis for the divine descent of the Āḷvārs and *Ācāryas*. While some of them are held to be the divine weapons of Viṣṇu descended down to the earth, others are verily, Ādiśeṣa and Viṣvakśena. The contact with the material world does not in the least affect the nature of their having been released. With their knowledge and other attributes without being influenced by the limitations of the world, they moved on as if they were in Vaikuṇṭham. The mortal frame alone declared them to be men on earth. This is clear from the life accounts of all the Āḷvārs, with notable exceptions.[8] These exceptions are exceptions only in one sense. While the other Āḷvārs had occasions to display their God-hunger from the very time of their birth, these had to wait for an occasion for their spiritual realization getting aroused. This does not however prove that they do not belong to the host of devout men.

As it is God that awakens religious consciousness in man, it is not necessary that to be religious-minded, one should be intelligent or undergo training.[9] This is clear from the example of Dhruva.[10] Just as one could lead a pure life without being learned and one who is deeply learned is not necessarily

7. It is in this light that the Upaniṣadic passage requires to be explained. cf. Taitt. Up. 2: 9; *The Essentials of Theism*, p.93.
8. Periyāḷvār, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār, Matura-kāviyāḷvār and Kulācekarāḷvār.
9. *Man, the Unknown*, pp. 282-83.
10. Bhāg. P. 4.9.

found to lead a moral life, aesthetic and religious senses could be aroused in men who have no education. Those who are educated are found to lack in aesthetic and religious senses. Hence religious consciousness is not the prerogative of the learned few nor is it confined to the persons born in the higher castes only. The Vaiṣṇavite theology has wisely adopted a sane line of interpretation. Instead of giving credit to the superior social status of a devotee, it has made God's grace, after the pattern of *Upaniṣads*, as mainly responsible for the arousing of religious consciousness, the individual, whatever be his status, being only the medium for the display of religious sense. It is in this sense that Nammāḷvār, though he was not born in the higher caste, is admitted in the tradition of the Vaiṣṇavite religion as the super-*prapanna*, being at the head of all his followers and through whom alone all who came after him have to approach God.

While speaking about God whose infinity in every one of His aspects lies beyond human range, limitations of one kind or other are to be faced. God is the Lord of time and He is not in time. He is beyond space and not within it. Everything other than God is finite. Therefore there is nothing that could be brought in to depict Him or any aspect of His with reference to the temporal, spatial and objective world. It is because of this that the Supreme Person is said to be beyond the reach of the words and thought.[11] However, men cannot assume silence on this account. He begins to articulate or blabber what is surging within. This inadequacy of expression is responsible for man's incompetence to effectively and correctly describe God. He therefore chooses his own expressions, for he does not know any other. He draws for purposes of analogical expressions, instances of the world with which he is familiar. Hence he describes God as surgarcane, honey and so on.[12] All the same, these do not fully bring out the greatness of God.

11. Taitt. Up 2: 9.

12. Peri. Tm. 7.3; 10; cf. ibid. 2 3: 2; ibid. 7.10: 1, 2 and T.V.M. 3.4. and *The Essentials of Theism* p. 94.

A passionate longing on the part of the devotee to have direct vision of God is not without justification. The prayers and pleadings would not only become unintelligible and worthless but would also create in the mind of the devotee an utter indifference, though not dis-illusionment, towards God, had not the Deity taken step to communicate Himself to the devotees. The sense of complete dependence of the devotee on God instils hope for the aspirant and makes the sufferings for reunion with God bearable. That self could have the direct apprehension of God who chooses to display His greatness to it. It is in this sense that God's presentation of His omnipresent form to Arjuna is to be explained. Man's limited powers of understanding are no match for God's eminence and as such he approaches God with the commingling of reverential fear and attraction. There is room for fear because the whole thing is mysterious and he cannot any longer bear the sight which overpowers him. Divine perfection however draws him near God.

The impact of the external world on the human mind could be interpreted to be threefold. The ideas are aroused, the objectiveness is felt and the human beings function themselves with reference to it verbally or through physical activities. Logic, sense organs and semantics respectively operate in these three fields. The results which are arrived at through the operation of these, establish that there shall be a powerful being behind the subjective world as well as the objective one. The mind of that being who could be designated as God is behind all this. The tasks of creation and protection of these presuppose that the idea of God is sustainable. The more one reflects deeply on this the more one is convinced that a reverential attitude is aroused in man for God. Naturally, those who reflect and meditate upon this become worshippers of the Divine. Others who could not adopt this process follow simply what these do and join them. This is the reason why worshippers of God are far more numerous than the worshippers of mammon or any other thing in the world.[13]

13. cf. *Collected Papers of Charles Saunders Pierce*, edited by Charle, Hartsharne and Paul, Weiss 6, cited on p. 486 of *God in Modern Philosophy*.

Philosophy, which is of the nature of enquiry into the nature of reality, adopts several methods of proving the existence of God such as metaphysical and ontological[14] and the moralistic.[15] It is one thing to attempt at proving God's existence and it is another to attempt at knowing Him. The former is an act which is purely an intellectual feat and comprises analytical procedures which tend to become more and more abstract, leaving aside the existential aspect of God. However, those who are keen on knowing Him do not but take note of the fact that there must be a creator for the world. The devotion which they have for the Divine does not make them indulge in abstract discussions as to the manner in which creation could have taken place or the materials out of which the world has been created. The idea that He who created does also afford protection and therefore He alone shall be approached for protection is uppermost in their minds. Hence the devout worshippers, like the Āḷvārs, refer constantly to

The general understanding of creation is that God creates the world in order that the selves, which lie inactive during the period of deluge, could take the physical frames in accordance with the results of their past deeds and undergo experiences for such actions and gain also fresh and new ones which if He wills would contribute to their spiritual progress and if He does not would leave them far behind. The Vaiṣṇavite theology would offer a better and more convincing explanation for this theory. As a matter of fact, this is, in a general way, the interpretation offered by the theologians of any religion. The *Upaniṣads* declare that creation is an act of the Will of the Divine[16] and that the world is a sport[17]. Both these require an explanation. Why should the Divine entertain a will? If the intention of God is to bring a world into being in which the selves would have recompense for their

14. These methods are not fully effective. Vide: *God in Modern Philosophy*, pp. 398–399 and *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 476.

15. cf. *The Essentials of Theism*, pp. 117, 141.

16. Taitt. Up. 2: 6.

17. V.S. 2.1: 33.

deeds, then this would be only a repetition of what happened earlier, that is, before deluge. Again, God is said to enjoy the world as a child does its playthings. The selves are not inanimate objects like playthings. They have the capacity to enjoy or suffer when affected by others. Will not God be contributing to their suffering also? How then could he be justified if He adds to their sufferings in His sports with them? A study of the compositions of the Āḷvārs shows that God creates the world through His Will prompted by generosity for mankind. If finite beings exist, they do so because of the sustenance they derive from the Infinite. The selves, which also come under the category of the finite, shall not be allowed to remain in complete ignorance of their nature in relation to the Supreme Person. God therefore provides, through creation, an opportunity for the selves to "have an actual share in the general nature of being".[18] This is well expounded in Vaiṣṇavite theology. It is to protect His men that God descends down to the earth which He has created. It could rather be said with the Āḷvār that God takes such forms which His particular devotee yearns to behold and have communion with and presents Himself before him.[19] This explains the various descents which the Lord took in *vibhava* and also *arcā*. God felt that He should be with His man and came to him, entered his heart and filled it up to the brim.[20] He made the Āḷvār realize His full pervasion of His person. He has not chosen to leave him on any account. The Āḷvār notably observes that He is casting His looks hither and thither remaining within him.[21] It is this kind of intense communion which the cowherdesses in Vṛndāvana sought passionately. This is suggested to be the motive for the creation of the world and divine descent of the Lord.[22]

Theology is based on mere faith which takes divine disclosure of truth as never failing and hence does not provide

---

18. *The Essentials of Theism*, p. 103.
19. M. Tv. 44.
20. T.V.M. 1.7: 7; 9.6: 3, 5, 8. 10.
21. ibid., 1.9.
22. Rāmānuja: *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* 4:8

scope for the exercise of free reasoning. Revelation is admitted of unquestioned authority. On the other hand, philosophical enquiry affords room for a critical examination of all facts and begins questioning even the authority of revelation. The Vaiṣṇavite school brings about a reconciliation between the two. Revelation can be examined critically but could not be discarded. Revelation which takes the name of the *Vedas* is a document as it were containing the findings of eternal truths offered by great seers as a result of their spiritual intuition. These truths intuited by the sages lie beyond the operation of the senses and so beyond inference also. Naturally the authority of revelation which contains information on these truths cannot be explained away but could be explained on grounds of reason.

The *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* begins with an enquiry of Brahman and notes the stages marked by *anna*, *prāṇa*, *manas*, *vijñāna* and *ānanda*. The conclusion arrived at is that Brahman is *ānanda* which is a strong ground for maintaining that Brahman is bliss *(ānanda)* and *rasa* (delectation). Bliss is not denied to the individual self but there is a gradation in the quantum of bliss which goes on increasing with the selves who are placed at different levels. It is said in this *Upaniṣad* that the bliss of Brahman is too great being at the highest stage representing it from the stage of man.[23] Both these facts are to be studied together and result of this study would show that Brahman is of unexcelled bliss The Sanskrit word for unexcelled is '*niratiśaya*' which means unsurpassed, thereby meaning 'that a stage higher than that of Brahman does not exist'. The Āḻvārs start there where the treatment was left by the *Upaniṣads*. Hence Nammāḻvār begins the *Tiruvāymoḻi* with the words "uyarvu aṟa uyarnalam uṭaiyavaṉ". "uyarvu aṟa" means 'having no higher of that category'. "uyar nalam" means 'great bliss'. The passage means that Brahman has great bliss which has no higher stage. This is only a paraphrase, rather a more explicit rendering of the Sanskrit word '*niratiśaya*'. Another factor that requires mentioning here is that the word '*brahman*' which means 'big and in-

23. Taitt Up. 2: 8.

creasing' is aptly rendered by Nammālvār in the passage cited above. To be huge or great. Brahman must have some other objects which shall be smaller to it. To be increasing, it must go on inereasing, the previous stages being marked by the occupation of others which could not compete with it. Both these meanings show that Brahman is supreme and must possess attributes which alone could be made use of for noting the difference between it and others. Innumerable qualities should be meant here, for Brahman's eminence and superiority over other things must be in all aspects without exception. The *Upaniṣads* rightly state *ānanda* as the supreme mark of Brahman and rightly did Nammāḷvār note this and introduced this concept in the opening line of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. The ultimate truth *(tattva)* is thus started here by the Āḻvār.

The *Upaniṣads*[24] describe Brahman as '*rasa*', that is, enjoyable. The next passage tells us that on getting it, the self becomes blissful. That is, the self is able to enjoy communion with God after realizing Brahman. Standing at a distance with awe and terror is not what characterises God-realization. It is not simple *karma*, doing rights which are enjoined by the *Vedas*. Merely knowing Brahman does not satisfy the self. Enjoyability of God's presence marks the result which the self shall aspire for even in this life. There is thus a mystic tinge in the Vaiṣṇavite concept of God-realization. This experience *(anubhava)* cannot be complete and perfect so long as the self lives in this world. It can assume its fullness *(paripūrṇabrahmānubhava)* only in the stage of final release when all shackles of the material kind get shattered.

It is held that the Upaniṣadic passages like 'All this is verily Brahman'[25] point to the pantheistic tinge, but what this passage means is that this world constituting all the existent things is Brahman. The world does not exhaust Brahman which transcends it.[26] Besides, the passage means that the

24. Taitt. Up. 2.7.
25. Ch. Up. 3.14: 1
26. R.V. 10.90: 1.

world is in Brahman, owing its being and sustenance to it. God is transcendental, a feature which explains His infinitude. He is also immanent which consists not only in being the inner essence of the world, or their core but also its epicentre controlling and ruling the world. This explains that God is the redeemer "apportioning pleasures and penalties in exact proportion to the moral worthiness of the *kartā* or doer."[27] This Vedāntic concept of Brahman does not offer any consolation to suffering humanity. The negative concept[28] of Brahman having no inequality or cruelty with reference to the selves who get the results according to the nature of their deeds[29] does not give the selves any hope for depending upon God in order to become free from the miserable effects of the deeds committed voluntarily or otherwise. God is therefore declared in the *Āgamas* as taking the five forms out of mercy for helping humanity. These forms do not represent any anthropomorphic development. Rightly does the school of Vaiṣṇavism attach importance to the *vibhava* and *arcā* forms of God. Even there the *arcā* form gets more significance. Divine grace makes God take the divine form called *Śubhāśraya* or *Divyamaṅgalavigraha* (auspicious form) the very name of which shows that it has no material setting. This sets aside the concept of incarnation of the Christian theology from getting applied to this concept of *vibhava* and *arcā* which could be better rendered by the word '*avatāra*' or divine descent. Divine mercy which displays itself in these forms is the outcome of the ethical perfection of God which is represented by *amalatva*. In one word '*amalatva*' shows the absence of all possible defects and attributable changes which the selves and the non-sentient things are subjected to. This quality stands for purity of all kinds.

The Absolute or abstract deity does not satisfy the God-hunger of man. The devotion of man does not get perfected until there is a response from the Divine. Man yearns to have some sort of personal relationship with God. The concept of

27. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 152.
28. *V.S.* 2.1: 34.
29. *Br, Up.* 4.4: 5.

a personal deity is thus necessary for the devout worshipper. What kind of personal relationship man would be desirous of having cannot be easily determined. It depends to a large extent on two factors. The first one is the nature of response on the part of God that would evoke feelings of attraction in the devotee The second factor lies in the mental attitude, aptitude and capacity of man to receive the particular kind of response from God. The accumulated residues of *karma* of the self in previous births have a definite part in shaping the predilections of man. One cannot predict what kind of reception the self would be able to offer to God God could be considered as creator and protector. In general, fatherhood of God could receive stress in this case. Respect coupled with freedom, restraint associated with submission to the dictates of a supreme well-wisher and a sense of security which the deity would not withhold from the sinner, not in the least mindful of the latter's defects, mark the attitude of the devotee. The forms of the Lord as the child Kṛṣṇa and the youthful Rāma attracted almost all the Āḷvārs making them treat such forms with parental affection. It is really surprising how the element of devotion transforms the attitude of the devotees. Parental affection is expected by the devotees of God but here, the devotee treats himself as the parent of the child who is God Himself. In certain cases, the loveliness of the form of God as that of Kṛṣṇa and more so of that in the *arcā* form as in the shrines of Tirunaṟaiyūr captured the mind and senses of the Āḷvārs to the extent of making them behave as though they were the spouses fit for the Lord.

One of the greatest contributions made by the Āḷvārs in regard to the concept of the Godhead is the stress on the infatuating aesthetic beauty of God. The theological background for this is supplied in the sacred texts such as epics, *Purāṇas* and *Āgamas*. The Āḷvārs went into raptures at the enchanting beauty of the *arcā* forms which they identified with the Sleeping Beauty in the milky ocean and the *vibhava* forms.[30] The aesthetic attribute *ānanda* forms the basis for the enjoyment of the forms whose attractiveness is to a large

30. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p.205.

extent related to the ethical perfection of *amalatva*. This is well borne out by the composition of Tiruppāṇāḷvār who begins it by referring to this attribute and surveys graphically the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam from foot to head. The Āḷvārs conceive of this elegant beauty even in Nature which serves as a vesture to the Divine and become attracted to God treating Him as a child or lover and themselves as father, mother and beloveds. It is rightly remarked : "But to the *mumukṣu*, as a mystic who seeks the intimacy of communion, the ontological Beyond and the ethically Perfect have no value or attraction. It is aesthetics that mediates between metaphysics and ethics and brings down heaven to earth, and elevates earth to heaven. Aesthetics is midway between sensuousness and spirituality, and bridges the gulf between the finite and infinite".[31]

The compositions of the Āḷvārs are more expository of God-realization than being a critical enquiry into God's existence. Their mystical experiences are recorded in their compositions. The Āḷvārs had much of the aesthetic temperament which involves hard discipline and renouncement of all the things in the world. Practice of contemplation shall be continued for a long time expecting the spiritual light to be shed. Shut from the world, the aspirant weans himself from himself. "His mind escapes from space and time".[32] He gets communion with God and enjoys his realization of the ineffable Being possessed of aesthetic perfection and innumerable virtues which draw the human mind to It.

The idea of God, as could be gathered from the ancient sources such as *Vedas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas* and *Āgamas*, is found inherited by the Āḷvārs. The *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* took up for treatment a personal deity, endowed with a frame of aesthetic perfection. Initiated into mystic experience, the Āḷvārs went into raptures at their commuion with the Divine beauty which presented Itself in a variety of

31. ibid.. p.201.

32. *Man, the Unknown*, p.132.

forms and at times in accordance with their wishes also. The one feature that could be declared to be prominent in their compositions is that they felt not infrequently the physical limitations which prevented them from having uninterrupted communion and yearned for a termination of these limits in order to have Him within and without and enjoy His immediate and intense presence.

PRE-ĀḶVĀR PERIOD

SUMMARY

In this section it is shown that Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion which the Āḷvārs have propounded in their works is as old as Hinduism. While philosophy defines Brahman as the Godhead that takes its role in creation, sustenance and destruction, religion identifies the same Godhead as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all the souls.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in the *Ṛg Veda*. He rose to eminence during the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. His three strides made Him identified with the sun. He is at first a friend and well-wisher of Indra. His eminence is evident from the appellation *Puruṣa* which He assumed. On the plane of ritualism, He came to be identified with the sacrifice and on the philosophical side, He became the inner controller of all beings. The concept of His divine descent emerges in the later periods when He became fit for adoration and came to be called *Nārāyana*.

In the epics and *Purāṇas*, Viṣṇu came to be treated as the supreme deity with the names *Bhagavān*, *Vāsudeva* and others. With His countless qualities endearing Him to humanity, both gods and

men approached Him in times of distress. The *Pāñcarātra* doctrines get treated in these works, especially in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata.* His various de cents for the sake of humanity receive special attention in these works. Devotion, worship of the deity and devotees and congregational prayers form part of the practical religion preached here.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* identifies Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu. The concept of Viṣṇu as Puruṣa paves the way for the declaration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Puruṣottama, Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity is reiterated here Such concepts as that the world is real forming part of the Supreme, the concept of *Prakṛti* as not being an independent principle, the dependence of self on the Universal Self being only His instrument, that the self should do his duty, the doctrine of *karma*, the path of emancipation, and the relationship of God and the soul have received significant treatment in the *Gītā*. Stress is laid here on discipline and duty. Both the deed and its results are to be dedicated to Viṣṇu.

The *Āgamas* lay stress on the external mode of worship without barring the mental worship emphasized in the *Gītā*. The various modes of worship, their ritualistic details, the concept of five-fold forms of God, the emphasis on *bhakti* and *prapatti*, specific details with regard to the erection of the temples, information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites, specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor have all found their place in the Āgamic texts. The antiquity

of the *Pāñcarātra* mode of worship is known from epigraphical and literary sources. The *arcā* form of worship and the elevation of the act of worship to the state of sacred rite (*yāga)* are some of the striking features of the *Āgamas*. The *Vaikhānasa* mode, which is equally ancient, has some marked features. The *Jitante Stotra* which is perhaps pre-Āgamic in date, deals with the doctrine of *prapatti* and *sāḍguṇya* of Viṣṇu.

The path of devotion is reiterated in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya with greater emphasis on the unique nature of devotion. Love of God is insisted as an essential pre-requisite for the operation of the divine Grace and therefore posited as a precondition for salvation. Classification of devotion, its manifestation in many forms, the means for the attainment of devotion, the positive means for the cultivation of devotion get full treatment in these texts. The *Dharma-śāstras* deal with the code of good conduct, modes of expiation for sinful deeds, the religious rites which are to be performed in the sacred fire and the greatness of the deities. The rules to be followed by the devotees of Vi ṇu are endorsed in these works.

These ideas and concepts spread to the far south and found entry in the ancient classics of Tamil literature some of which could be assigned to the period before the birth of Christ. The *Pattu-p-pāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭu-t-tokai* collections which are the production of these periods reveal the extent to which the fundamental doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism as recorded in the Sanskrit works came to be admitted into the Viṣṇu

cult in the Tamil regions. The *Pāñcarātra* concept of *vyūha* was a familiar tenet in these parts. Temple worship was a well-known trait of the cult of Viṣṇu. Certain anecdotes in the life accounts of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and others not to be found in the Sanskrit sources, have been in vogue and seem to have had their rise only in these regions.

There were several streams of philosophical and religious tradition connected with the cult of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa and Bhagavān are the names of the deity treated at different periods as fit for adoration. The identity of the deity as having some of these names was dealt in some of the source books and finally before the birth of Christ, all these names came to refer to only one deity, Nārāyaṇa. Devotion, mystic experiences, worship in the temple, features marking the life of a devotee have all come to form the foundations of the Viṣṇu cult in the period preceding that of the Āḷvārs and could be treated as the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism which created a deep impression on these Tamil Vaisṇavite saints.

CHAPTER II

VIṢṆU IN VEDIC LITERATURE

The *Vedas* are the earliest literary records of the ancient Indians. They are four under the names *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Of these, the *Ṛgveda* is the earliest and is the foundation for the composition of the other three *Vedas*. The name '*Ṛgveda*' means the *Veda* of adorations. Such adorations are directly addressed to gods whose forms shone forth in the hearts of the poets who were the seers of *Mantras*. Among the various gods who were adored in this *Veda*, Agni and Indra have about two-thirds of 1017 hymns addressed to them. Maruts, Rudra, Aśvins, Savitṛ, Varuṇa, Viṣṇu and Mitra are among the well-known gods who are adored in the remaining portion. Offerings were made in the sacred fire invoking the gods even at the very ancient time when the hymns were composed and for this reason, Agni who represented the sacred fire, was given special treatment in the *Ṛgveda*. Similarly, Indra, as the Lord of gods, received frequent invocations. Agni or Indra do not get any preferential treatment over the other gods nor is any special significance attached to the latter.

In the other *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of them including those of the *Ṛgveda*, Rudra and Viṣṇu gained prominence without any detriment to the positions of Agni and Indra. The exclusive importance which Rudra and Viṣṇu acquired is to be found for the first time in some of the *Upaniṣads* like *Śvetāśvatara*, *Atharvaśiras*, *Jābāla* and others in the case of the former and *Mahānārāyaṇīya*, *Subāla*, *Nṛsiṃhatāpanīya* and others in the case of the latter. Later, their greatness shot forth in the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* to dizzy hights overshadowing the original great positions of other gods.

Among these two gods, Rudra is celebrated in the *Ṛgveda*[1] as fierce, exalted and unassailable.[2] The hymns addressed to Him refer to the fear of his terrible missiles[3]. He is implored not to injure people, cattle and to save them from distress[4]. He is referred to as the physician among the physicians[5]. To avoid His wrath, oblations are to be offered to Him[6] and obeisance to be shown to Him[7]. Prayers are offered to Him in order that His worshippers could be happy with sons, grandsons and all their relatives[8]. Īśāna[9] and Kapardin[10] appear as His epithets. In the other *Saṃhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, Mahādeva[11] and Śiva occur as His names. He holds the Pināka bow in the hand[12]. The *Yajurveda* glorifies Him in a section which became known, as *Śatarudriya*[13]. This paved the way for His glorification in the *Śvetaśvātara-upaniṣad.*

The benevolent aspect of Rudra in offering protection to His worshippers in times of distress must have given rise to the appellation Śiva to Rudra. This word '*śiva*' which means auspicious, came to be used for Rudra in the post-vedic period and the creed of Śaivism arose out of this word. The word, '*bhāgavata*', which is normally taken to mean a devotee of Viṣṇu, seems to have been used with the word '*śiva*' as *Śiva bhāgavata,* in the sense of devotee of Śiva[14]. The *Śiva-*

---

1. R.V. 1 43; 1.114; 2.33; 5.42; 7.46
2. ibid. 1.114:9, 2.33:9.
3. ibid. 2.33:10, 14.
4. ibid. 1 114:7, 8; 2.33:14
5. ibid. 2.33:4
6. ibid. 2.33:5
7. ibid 1.114:11; 5.42:11
8. ibid. 2.33:14
9. ibid. 2.33:9
10. ibid. 1.114:1
11. *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 2.9.1; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7 33; *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 10.11:2. Burning of the three cities is referred to in the *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 6.2:3.
12. *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 1.8.6.2; *Vājasaneyasaṃhitā* 3:61; 16:51.
13. *Śuklayajurveda* 16.18.
14. *Vārttika on Aṣṭādlyāyi.* 2.1.60.

bhāgavatas are described[15] to have "carried in their hands iron lances as an emblem of the deity they worthipped"[16].

It is held that Śaivism was a flourshing creed in North-Western India and that the worship of Śiva extended in the hill regions in the West "as far as Bactria, the present Balkh in Afghanistan, and in the north as far Meros or Meru, which may be identified with Pamir"[17]. It combined in it the elements of the Vedic and Indus Valley cultures[18]. In the course of its development, it absorbed many of the peculiarities of the Dravidian and Indus Valley civilization[19]. The Dravidian origin of Śaivism and the absorption of this creed into the Āryan fold is also advocated by some scholars. Kashmir and South India have been all along the greatest strongholds of Śaivism.

The Rudra-Śiva cult has more of the ascetic element and yogic practices which characterise the life of its votaries. It is only in the later stages of its development, particularly in Southern India, that devotion marked the dominant feature of this cult. Yet, the cult owes not a little to the Vedic texts for inspiration and development.

Vaiṣṇavism is as old as Śaivism, or for that matter Hinduism and it has been extolled through the ages as the religion of redemption. It connotes the religion in which Viṣṇu, the eternally pure and perfect, enters into the history of humanity with a view to redeeming the bound self from sinfulness and selfishness and vaiṣṇavise its nature. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism makes the meaning more explicit by defining the dual function of Viṣṇu as *Śrīyaḥpati* which consists in universal redemption. While Viśiṣṭādvaita as a philosophy defines Brahman as the Godhead that creates, sustains and destroys the universe with a view to brahmanising the finite self, Vaiṣṇavism in its religious aspect identifies the same Godhead

15. *Mahābhāṣya* 5.2:76
16. *Evolution of Hindu Sects* p. 94
17. ibid, p. 95
18. ibid. p. 102
19. ibid. p. 104

as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all souls and vaiṣṇavises their nature.

The *Vedas* comprise of four Books, *Ṛk*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*. Each has four divisions called *Saṃhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇvaka* and *Upaniṣad* In the view of the scholars of the West, these *Vedas*, together with these divisions, were composed at different periods by several authors[20]. The *Ṛg Veda* is the earliest among them, some of whose hymns are found incorporated in the *Saṃhitās* of other *Vedas*. These scholars maintain that in the earliest periods, the Ṛg Vedic seers were worshipping Nature[21] and that anthropomorphism was a feature of Vedic religion. It must, however, be said in this connection that the deities are considered to have both visible and invisible forms and that the forms which are considered to be visible have marked features which could belong to a corporeal form This proves the inadmissibility of the theory of anthropmorphism.[22] The very idea of worship presupposes that the worshipper is cognisant of the superior and beneficial features in the character of the deity concerned. Without having a concept of what a deity would be like, there cannot rise the concept of worship. Nature too is divine, according to the Hindu ideals, and so if it is said to have been propitiated, it must have been only as representing an aspect of the divine that worship could have proceeded.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in *Rg-Veda*. He is being celebrated in only five or six whole hymns, but his name occurs not more than a hundred times in all. He is said to be young, but vast in body, not a child, and his one great action is taking of three strides; hence he is called the wide strider. The word '*urugāya*' which is used in *Ṛg-Veda* 1.154:1 is taken by A.A. Macdonell in the sense of 'wide-going'. Sāyana, however, takes it in the sense of 'praised by the great'. The long strides which he takes and the three steps by which he measures the universe, are always

20. *History of Sanskrit Literature*. pp. 202-205
21. *A Vedic Reader* (Introduction). p. XVIII
22. *The Central Philosophy of Buddhisme* p. 15

described with an enthusiastic spirit. Of the three strides two are visible to men and can be approached by them, but the third no one can transgress, and is beyond the ken even of birds.[23] But again it is said the wise see the highest place of Viṣṇu - called *Paramapada* - as it were an eye fixed in the heaven.[24] That highest place where there is well of honey[25] is said to be the dear abode of Viṣṇu, beyond the ordinary mortal ken, which 'man apprehends not, nor can the soaring winged birds pursue'[26] and in which 'Gods rejoice'[27] and 'god-seeking men delight'.[28] The Ṛg-Vedic poets pray[29] that people may go to this blessed abode of Viṣṇu, 'where he himself dwells inscrutable' to enjoy felicity. Hopkins opines[30] that the later popularity of the god lies in the importance of his *Paramapada* which is said to have been the home of departed spirits.[31] In later times, *Viṣṇu-pada* became a synonym of the sky and the abode of Viṣṇu became the goal of spiritual aspirations of the devotees of that God and several places situated usually on the top of the hills came to be styled as *Viṣṇu-pada*.

It is understood from Durgācārya's commentary on Yāska's *Nirukta*[32] that the three steps of Viṣṇu are the three periods of the sun's course viz., his rise, culmination and setting. But Keith points out that this interpretation is not in keeping with the highest place of Viṣṇu.[33] According to another ancient commentator, Śākapūṇi, by name, the three *padas* are believed to refer to the three-fold manifestation of light in the three divisions of the universe. viz., fire on earth, lightning in the atmosphere, and the sun in the sky.[34] The

23. RV. 1.155: 5.
24 ibid., I.22: 20.
25. ibid., I.154: 5.
26. ibid., I.155: 5.
27. ibid., VIII.29: 7.
28. ibid., I.154: 5.
29. ibid., I.154: 6.
30. *Religions of India*, p 56.
31. RV. 1.154: 5,6.
32. *Nirukta* 12: 19.
33. *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*. I., p.108.
34. cf. *Vedic Mythology*, p.38.

Taittirīya Saṁhitā and the *Śatapātha Brāhmaṇa*[35] also refer to the three places of Viṣṇu as earth, air and sky. The three imperishable steps mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* were endowed in later times with a spiritual meaning. The Besnagar inscriptions interpret the 'immortal' *padas* as denoting 'Self-control, renunciation, and vigilance which lead one to haven' apparently pointing to the abode of Viṣṇu as the God of gods.[36]

The *Ṛg-Veda* regards Viṣṇu as a youth and as a leader who is said to have defeated Śambara.[37] In the capacity of a warrior Viṣṇu is often closely associated with Indra and the two gods are supposed to be masters of the world.[38] He is the helper of Indra with whom he is often allied in the fight with Vṛtra.[39] In the hymns addressed to Viṣṇu alone Indra is the only other deity incidentally associated with him. One hymn is dedicated to the two gods conjointly.[40] Through the Vṛtra myth, the Māruts, Indra's companions, are drawn into alliance with Viṣṇu, who throughout one hymn is praised in combination with them.[41] According to a legend in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[42] Varuṇa, Bṛhaspati, and Viṣṇu successively helped Indra in turning out the *asuras*. In the *Ṛg-veda* Viṣṇuis certainly inferior to Indra as is evident from such names as Indra Viṣṇu.[43] But there is no doubting the fact that the Vedic legends served as the basis on which the superstucture of the Viṣṇu mythology of later times was built. Barnett suggests that, according to the lay imagination, a transfusion took place of some of the life blood of Indra, the most truly popular god of action among the Ṛg-Vedic deities, into the veins of Viṣṇu, as a result of the close relation between the two gods in early Vedic conception.[44] According to later tradition, Viṣṇu is considered as one of the maifestations of the sun.[45] The later conception

35. Sat. Br. 1.9: 3, 9.
36. *Select Inscriptions* I, pp.90 f.
37. R.V. 7.99: 5.
38. ibid., 6.69; 7.99.
39. ibid., 4.18: 11.
40. ibid., 1.155.
41. ibid., 1.85: 7.
42. Ait Br. 3: 50.
43. ibid., 4.54: 4; 7.99: 5; 8.10: 2. etc.
44. *Hindu Gods and Heroes.,* p.41.
45. R.V. 1.155: 6.

of Viṣṇu as '*udyatkōṭi-divākarābha*' and '*savitṛmaṇḍala-madhyavartin*' as well as his association with the conch or discus resembling the disc of the sun god with the bird Garuḍa, adapted from the Ṛg-Vedic conception of the sun as a winged celestial bird, also points to His solar character. In many passages of the *Ṛg-Veda*, Viṣṇu is mentioned along with the Ādityas, while later works represent Him as one of them. All this shows that Viṣṇu was regarded as the sun or endowed with the qualities of the sun.

Viṣṇu, in spite of his comparatively subordinate position in the *Ṛg-Veda*, began to rise in importance in the time of the *Brāhmaṇas*.[46] In the Brāhmaṇic period there is the mention of Agni as the lowest *(avama)* of the gods and Viṣṇu as the highest *(parama)*.[47] These two terms may be taken to mean 'earthly' and 'heavenly' gods respectively. But the same work also regards Viṣṇu as the door-keeper *(dvārapa)* of the gods.[48] This is no doubt an uncomplementary epithet, unless it is taken to mean that Viṣṇu probably regulated entrance into the heavenly world. A Ṛg-Vedic passage calls Viṣṇu the germ (*garbha*) of *ṛta* which may mean sacrifice or moral order.[49] According to the *Śathapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 'Viṣṇu is the sacrifice; by striding, he obtained for the gods that all-pervading power which now belongs to them'.[50] The equation of Viṣṇu with the spirit of sacrifice was possibly suggested by the fact that both were considered to be helping or strengthening Indra and other gods [51]. In later literature, Viṣṇu is essentially connected with such names as *yajña*, *yajñeśvara*, *yajñapuruṣa* etc. According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* He averts the evil consequences of the defects in sacrifice, while Varuṇa protects the fruits of its successful performance.[52] The same work regards Agni and Visnu as the two *diksāpālas* or guardians of initiation.[53]

46. For the incidents in support of Viṣṇ u's importance, vide Sat. Br 14.1: 1; Taiti. Ar. 5: 1; Pan. Br. 7.5: 6.
47. Ait. Br. 1: 1.
48. ibid., 1: 30.
49. R.V. 1.156: 3.
50. Sat. Br. 1.9: 3,9.
51. *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, p.39 f.
52. Ait. Br. 3: 38.
53. ibid., 1: 4.

There is in the *Śathapatha Brāhmaṇā* the story of Viṣṇu the dwarf [54] which forms the germ of the post-Vedic story of the Vāmana-Trivikrama *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The same *Brāhmaṇa* also says how 'having assumed the form of a tortoise, Prajāpati created offspring' and in the form of a boar, he (Prajāpati) raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean'.[55] Again according to *Taittiriva Āraṇyaka*, the earth was raised from the waters by a black boar with a hundred arms and the *Taittiriva Saṃhitā* identifies the cosmogonic boar which raises up the earth with a form of Prajāpati.[56] The former work also alludes to Narasiṃha or Man-lion. The story of the Great Deluge in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* represents the fish that towed Manu's vessel into safety as a form of Prajāpati Brahmā and this is sometimes supported by epic and Purāṇic tradition. In later mythology, however, the function of the Boar, Fish and Tortoise forms of Prajāpati Brahmā is attributed to Viṣṇu, the most benevolent of the gods.

In the *Maitri Upaniṣad*[57] food that sustains the universe is called the form of Bhagavad-Viṣṇu. In the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*,[58] the progress of the human soul is compared to a journey, the goal of which is said to be Viṣṇu's *Paramapada*, the abode of eternal bliss.[59] The use of the word '*paramapada*' in this sense lends support to the view that the elevation of Viṣṇu to the dignity of the Supreme Being was due to the fact that the expression was capable of being used to denote this sense. This shows that Viṣṇu was often regarded as the greatest god in later Vedic times. Sometime later, Viṣṇu became even a household god. Accoring to the *Āpastamba*,[60] *Hiraṇyākeśin*,[61] and *Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtras*,[62] the bridegroom

---

54. Sāt. Br. 1.2: 4.
55. ibid., 14. 1: 2.
56. Taitt. S. 7.1: 5.
57. Mai Up 6: 13.
58. Kath. Up 3: 9
59. X. cf R.V. 1 22: 20.
60. Haradatta's com. on *Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra* 2. 4:15.
61. *Hiraṇyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra* 1.21:1.
62. *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* 1. 8:2.

is required to say to the bride in the ceremony of taking seven steps contained in the marriage ritual, 'May Viṣṇu be with you' This is perhaps a development of the *Ṛg-Vedic* idea that Viṣṇu is a protector of embryos and promoter of conception.[63]

There are references in the *Ṛg-Veda*[64] to Viṣṇu's association with cows which is probably indicated by the epithet '*gopā*' meaning 'protector of the cows' or 'herdsman' The same work describes the highest abode of Viṣṇu as the dwelling of 'many horned swiftly moving cows'.[65] The *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra* calls him 'Govinda' (cow-keeper or heardsman) and 'Dāmodara' (one with the cord round his belly).[66] In later times, spiritual interpretations of both the names were offered.[67]

The idea which is prominent in the *Upaniṣads* is that Brahman is the ground of all things. He is a conscious principle.[68] The word '*ātma*' is used in these texts[69] with free identification with Brahman and Puruṣa. The central theme of Upaniṣadic teaching is that Brahman is one without a second.[70] All the gods are subordinated to him.[71] Brahman has transcendent nature which baffles all human thought.[72] He has marvellous qualities which lie beyond human imagination.[73] He is depicted as having human perfections[74] which endear the suffering humanity to Him. He creates the world[75] and remains as its Inner Controller[76] and the self also.[77]

63 ibid.. 7.36 : 9; 10. 184: 1.
64. R.V. 1.22: 18; 10.19: 4.
65. ibid., 1.154: 6.
66. B.D.S. 2.5: 24.
67. M.Bh. 5.70: 8.
68 Ch. Up. 6.9: 3,4.
69. Br. Up. 2.5; 1. cf. Sv. Up. 3: 7 to 12.
70. ibid., 1.4: 11.
71. Ken. Up. 3.
72. Kath. Up. 3: 12.
73. ibid., 2:21, 22. Mun. Up, 3.1: 7; Sv. Up. 3: 19.
74. Sv. Up. 1:7, 3:11, 17; 6: 8; Kath. Up. 5:13.
75. Br. Up. 4.4:13.
76. Kath. Up, 5: 9, Mun. Up. 2.1: 4.
77. Br. Up. 3.4: 1; 4.4: 22.

Knowledge which should rise about the correct nature of Brahman is declared as the means of getting final release.[78] Good conduct is required to be practised to get at Brahman.[79] The goal of human endeavour is stated to be the highest place of Viṣṇu.[80]

The leading exponents of Vaiṣṇavism derived from the passages of the Vedic texts, inspiration and support of equating Viṣṇu with Brahman. In arriving at such a conclusion what is to be noted is the method of interpreting such passages. While it is quite possible to arrive at conclusions which would be at variance with the principles of Vaiṣṇavism it must be conceded that the Vedic passages admit also of different interpretations which favour the identification of Viṣṇu with Brahman. It is in the light of this interpretation that the Vedic passages should be looked upon as having served as the basis for the formulation of the doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Supreme Being according to Vaiṣṇavism is Viṣṇu with Lakṣmi.[81] The whole universe is pervaded by that Being both within and without.[82] The universe cannot actually contain Him and this justifies that Viṣṇu is growing and growing beyond the limitations of time and place.[83] The selves, the inanimate world and He form together and constitute *Tattvatraya*[84] out of which arose the later concept of God as having the animate and the inanimate as His attributes, thus lending support to the name *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. All the *Vedas* show Him to be the greatest. The word '*viṣṇu*'

---

78. ibid., 4.4: 14.
79. Kath. Up. 2: 24. of. Mun. Up. 3.1: 5.
80. ibid., 3: 9.
81. Taitt. S. 4.4: 12; Taitt. Br- 3.1: 2, 5; Taitt. Ar. 3.13: 1; Nar. Up. 93.
82. Nar. Up. 94.
83. *Puruṣasūkta*. 1.
84. Sv. Up. 1:8, 12 cf. 1.9 where the three are said to constitute Brahman.

suggests that the Supreme Being has unbounded powers to pervade anything and that nothing could prevent Him from using His own purposes.[85] One can count the dust particles on the earth, but cannot exhaust His powers.[86] That the word 'viṣṇu' is derived from the root 'viś', 'to enter into' receive justification here. To render the root 'viś' as active as it is done by A A. Macdonell does not appear to be warranted.[87] He is Himself the creator, protector and destroyer of the universe which represents only Himself,[88] and this reveals that He is the material and instumental cause of the universe. He created the universe and entered into it[89] and this suggests that He became the Indweller and then Inner Conroller. He controls the world of animate and inanimate beings as the self does the body inside where it dwells. This presupposes the fundamental tenet of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school that He is the inner soul of all.[90] He is superior to all other deities who obey Him. The wind, the sun, the fire, Indra and Yama are afraid of Him and do their duties conscientiously.[91] He is stated to have measured the regions in order that people could have comfortable accommodation.[92] He maintains those regions[93] and supports the good deeds of people.[94] People could perform such deeds only through His favour.[95] He is available to His devotees in the form of *mantras*,[96] which are uttered when He is worshipped. He

85. ibid., 1.6, 10, 11.
86. R.V. 1.1.154: 1.
87. vide: *Vedic Reader*, p. 31
88. Taitt. Up. 3.1: 1.
89. Ch. Up. 6.3:31:1 Ait. Up. 1:1; Taitt. Ar. 3:11; Taitt. Up. 2.6:1.
90, Mun, Up. 2.1:4.
91. Taitt. Up. 2.8: 1. He could not be injured by anyone.
92, R. V. 1.154: 2.
93. ibid., 1,154: 4. cf. Br. Up. 3.8:9.
94. ibid. 1.22: 18.
95. ibid., 1.22: 19.
96. ibid., 1.154: 2. The word 'giriṣṭhāḥ' is taken by Śāyana in this sense, while Macdonell takes it in the sense of remaining in the mountain. Vide: *Vedic Reader*, pp. 32, 33

awards to the people the fruits of their deeds.[97] He is related to all those who do good deeds.[98] Thus it comes to admitting the need for being devoted to Him in order to avoid distresses [99] He grants the desires to His devotees, and the regions over which He strode are always prosperous.[100] The husband and wife are asked to worship through sacrifice and get the results of their undertaking.[101] His favour is thus needed[102] and one will be forewarned of these consequences before one intends to commit misdeeds.[103] Good deeds, when undertaken remove the sins.[104] His control over everything by being within is not realized by people and in order to make this ealizable, the things are said to be controlled by His will. Earth, water, fire, atmosphere, wind, sky, sun, quarters of heaven, moon, stars, space, darknesss (matter), luminaries, all elements, vital airs, speech, eye, ear, mind, skin, understanding and vital fluid are mentioned in this order with the change that '*ātman*' implies knowledge in the *Mādhyandina* recension of the *Śuklayajurveda*.[105] He has two forms,[106] one which is visible and the other as lying beyond human apprehension. His body is divine as it is clear from His charming limbs[107] shining like gold[108] and resembling lotuses.[109] His

---

97. ibid., 1.154: 3. The word 'vṛṣṇe' is taken in the sense of pouring forth desires by Śāyana' but Macdonell takes it to mean the bull. vide: *Vedic Reader*, p.33. The word '*ekat*' used here is suggestive of Viṣṇu's greatness in standing above and achieving any task without anybody's help.
98. Śāyana on R.V. 1.154: 5.
99. R.V. 1.154: 4.
100. ibid., 1.154: 4; Sv. Up. 6:13
101. ibid. 1.154.6. The word 'vām' is addressed to husband and wife. Macdonell takes it in the senae of Agni and Viṣṇu.
102. Kath. Up. 2:22.
103. Kau. Up. 3.9.
104 *Mahānārāyaṇīva* 17:6.
105. Br. Up. 3.7: 3.
106. ibid., 3.7.3.
107. Ch. Up. 1.6:6.
108. ibid., 1.6:6; Mun. Up. 3.1:3; *Puruṣasūkta*. 20.
109. ibid., 1.6: 7.

yellow raiment [110] lends charm to His frame. His holy smell[111] renders fragrant everything with which it comes into contact. He is ever youthful.[112] On account of these features He is absolutely free from defects.[113] The self and He occupy the same place,[114] namely, the body which shows that He sustains them without in the least affected by the impurities of the material body.[115] The soul however has to taste the fruits of the deeds done by it in the past.

When Viṣṇu was the Supreme Being, a distinction was drawn to distinguish Him from other deities. This was done by calling Him *Puruṣa*. Other deities remained as deities. This is evident from the name *Puru.asūkta*[116] which was given to the hymn which is in praise of Him depicting Him as the source for the rise of every thing. This again suggests that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the animate and inanimate being. It is emphatically stated that there is no means but knowledge of the correct nature of God[117] that could help the self for obtaining *mokṣa*. Deeds are ephemeral and do not endure till the time when their fruits are to be realized and so have no meaning for adoption as the means of release.[118] The Supreme Being must be meditated upon; when at an advanced stage in this process, the Lord would be realized through intuition. Then all the knots that bind the self to this world are torn asunder freeing the self to leave the mortal world.[119] The *Upaniṣads*

---

110. Br. Up. 2.3: 6.
111. Ch. Up: 3. 14: 4.
112. R:V. 1.156: 2.
113. Sv. Up. 6: 15.
114: ibid., 1.9; Mun. Up. 3.1: 1. cf. R.V: 1,164: 20;
115. Kath. Up. 5:11.
116. *Ṛg-veda*, 10:90.
117. Taitt. Up, 2.1: 1; Taitt. Ar. 3,13: 1: Sv: Up. 3: 8. *Narasimhapūrva tāpinē* 1:6.
118. Ch. Up. 8.1: 6; Br. Up. 3.8: 10; Kath. Up. 2:10; Mān. Up. 1.2:7; 1.1: 5, 6.
119. Br. Up. 2.4:5; Mun. Up. 2.2: 8

use also the expression '*upāsita*'[120] which literally means to attend upon by being near and this is highly suggestive of the path of devotion which became later well developed. In spite of all the efforts which an individual takes to visualize Him, it is His will that prevails in the matter of His presenting Himself before the devotee. Those who are deeply learned do not visualize Him while He presents Himself to those who are not learned. The case of the gopis in the Gokula illustrate this truth. He is the cause of both bondage and release.

The word '*nārāyana*' occurs as His epithet only in later *Upaniṣads* such as *Maitrī*[121] *Mahānārāyaṇīya*[122] and *Narayaṇa-pūrvatāpini*.[123] The *Nārāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*[124] establishes the identity of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa and *Puruṣa* and that all the four *Vedas* extol Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Being.

The course which would be taken by the soul to reach the place of emancipation, which is elaborated later by the Āḷvārs is found described graphically in the *Chāndogya*. It is known as *arcirādi mārga* as the self passes over into a flame, then into the day, half month, period of six months and so on.[125] The place which is reached by the self is gloriously described in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*.[126] In the released state, the self goes about as it likes with complete freedom eating whatever it desires and assuming the form it desires.[127] Release is thus the enjoyment by the soul of perfect power, freedom and bliss in the world of Brahman. The self thus attains immortality.[128] There is also a reference in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* to the

120. Kau. Up. 2:6; Ch. Up. 1.4:1; Br. Up. 4.1;2.

121. Mai. Up. 6:8.

122. Mahan. Up. 9.4

123. Nar. Up. 5.4

124. Narn. Up. 4.6.

125. Ch. Up. 4. 15: 5,6. Br. Ar. 6.2: 15, 16.

126. Kau. Up. 1: 3 to 7; cf. Ch. Up. 8.1: 5.

127. Taitt. Up. 3.10: 5; cf. Ken Up. 3: 4.

128. Kath. Up. 5: 13.

mystic union of the self with Brahman in the state of release.[129] According to *Śvetāśvatara* the self becomes merged in Brahman[130] and is in the state of peace for ever.[131] The *Maitri* declares that the self obtains a happiness which is undecaying and free from sickness.[132]

In conclusion, it may be said that the predominant thought of the *Upaniṣads* regarding the relation of the Supreme Being to the individual soul is this: God exists in the embodied individual as its principal consciousness. So some of the Upaniṣadic thinkers are impressed by this fact which led them to identify Brahman completely with the individual. But even then many of them have assumed that the migrating soul is not in all respects with Brahman. In some of the later *Upaniṣads* the thought appears that Brahman and the individual soul are two, the Supreme Self pervades the finite soul as something different from it, that He does not share in its imperfections and that He seeks by His grace to grant to the finite self that knowledge which it requires for obtaining release. Thus it is seen that even during the Vedic period, the Vedic deity Viṣṇu who was identified with the sun and another deity Puruṣa became one and the same. Later, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa and Nārāyaṇa came to be identified with each other. Viṣṇu came to be recognized as the Indweller of all, thus controlling every one for their well-being. He must therefore be worshipped for the sake of avoiding the sufferings of the world and to acquire complete freedom from worldly life. These texts contain references to the incidents connected with the fish, the boar and the tortoise saving the world from distresses and the three strides of Viṣṇu. These incidents were later developed into the theories of divine descent *(avatāra)*, though there is no indication of this theory being suggested in the Vedic texts as such.

---

129. Mun. Up. 3.2 : 8,9.
130. Sv. Up. 1 : 7.
131. ibid., 2 : 14; 3 : 20; 4 :7.
132. Mai. Up. 4 : 4.

CONCEPTION OF GOD IN ITIHĀSAS AND PURĀṆAS

The Brāhmaṇa,[1] Āraṇyaka[2] and Upaniṣadic[3] portions of the *Vedas* contain episodes which were narrated by some Paurāṇikas while sacrifices were performed, and are referred to for clarification of the significance of the rites which are then enjoined for performance. Such episodes should have formed the basis for naming such narratives as *Itihāsa*, *Ākhyāna*,[4] *Upakhyāna*[5] and *Purāṇa*. *Itihāsa* is a narration of an incident that occurred at a very ancient period and is therefore referred to as *Purāvṛtta*. *Ākhyāna* is the narration of an incident where the name of its author is referred to, while that is not the case with the *Itihāsa*.[6] *Purāṇa* is only a new version of a narrative which is very old, older than that which is called *Itihāsa* and has a legendary character. Two definitions[7] of the *Purāṇas* are contained in the *Purāṇas* themselves, mainly with reference to the contents of the *Purāṇas* where these are mentioned. These are found to have only partial applicability in the case of other *Purāṇas* which must have been originally true to them but must have had later accretions.

Modern criticism[8] of the Vedic literature has invented certain demarcations in the periods of ancient literature as Vedic, Epic, Purāṇic etc. The contents of the *Vedas* show

---

1. Ait. Br. 7:3; 5.14; Kau.Br. 6:11; Sat. Br. 1.8.1:1
2. Ait. Ar. 2:
3. Br. Up. 2:1; Ch. Up. 5.3:11.
4. '*Akhyāna*' is the name given to that which is narrated by the author who witnessed it.
5. '*Upākhyāna*' is that which is narrated by the author who listened to its narration from author.
6. *Rāmāyana* is also called *Ākhyāna*, Bāla. 4.32; Yuddha. 128:118. *Mahābhārata* is also called *Ākhyāna* Adi.55:9.
7. V.P. 3.6. 24; Bhag. p.2.10:1.
8. *History of ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p.36.

that these limits are not only flexible but overlap with each other. Even before the Vedic period could be said to have come to an end, the other periods had not only come into existence but had progressive features which are evidenced by the archaic and Vedic expressions contained in most of the works belonging to these periods. It must however be admitted that notwithstanding these expressions the language of the works of these had become regularised to conform to set grammatical patterns but represent the period of transition from the purely Vedic to the classical stages. That these periods were practically coeval could be admitted on the ground that Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana son of Parāśara is held to have acquired the name Vyāsa by his systematic classification of the *Vedas*[9] and to have compiled the *Purāṇas* and composed the *Jaya*,[10] the nucleus of the present *Mahābhārata*.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* are the two well-known national Epics of India. They had their first public recitation during the performance of the Aśvamedha by *Rāma* and Sarpayāga by Janamejaya respectively. They were recited by the pupils of their authors. This establishes their connection with the Vedic rituals which is further attested by the word '*saṃhitā*'[11] used to refer to them. These epics[12] contain within themselves some narratives which they call *Itihāsas* of ancient origin. It is clear that these two epics have been mainly responsible for the growth and development of Vaiṣṇavism in the later periods.

In the epic *Mahābhārata*, which is held to glorify Viṣṇu and *Puraṇas*, Rudra's auspicious aspect gets its full treatment and development. During this period, Śiva is already one of the three important deities of Hinduism. Six *Purāṇas* were treated as conveying His greatness. Among them, the *Kūrma*, *Liṅga*, *Matsya* and *Vāyu* are of paramount

9. MBh. Adi. 64:80.
10. ibid., 62:22.
11. Rām. Yuddha 128:120; MBh. Ādi. 1:78.
12. ibid., 120: 32; MBh. Uddyoga. 36: 133; Droṇa 52; Śānti. 103, 104, 111; Anuśāsana. 50.

importance. Here are glorified the exploits of Śiva such as burning of the three cities, destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice and others. He had taken His abode in Kailāsa Several holy places, all through the length and breath of India, became associated with His name, rendered sacred for undertaking pilgrimages.

Kṛṣṇa, representing Viṣṇu in His decsent, was ever with the Pāṇdavas. Yet, Arjuna, one of the Pāṇdavas, did penance and obtained a powerful weapon from Śiva. Kṛṣṇa was Himself taught the Śaivite doctrines on meditation by sage Upamanyu.[13] The *Mahābhārata* contains *Śivasahasranāma* along with that of Viṣṇu [14] Śiva's greatness is expoudned in at least two places[15] in the epic. Kṛṣṇa visits Kailāsa twice[16] and on each occasion He prays to Śiva. However, both Kṛṣṇa and Śiva express their mutual admiratian for their proper[17] and perfect understanding the problems of philosophy. The *Purāṇas* are more sectarian in their outlook.[18] The epic seems to be above this attitude though Viṣṇu's eminence is repeatedly referred to[19]. The benedictory verse in the *Mahābhārata*, the reference to this epic as *Nārāyaṇakatha*[20] and its supplement *Harivaṃśa* dealing with the life and family of of Kṛṣṇa bear ample testimony to this fact. The indispensability of this epic for the study of Vaiṣṇavism is heightened by the treatment it contains of the *vyūha* doctrine[21] and its containing the *Bhagavadgīta*[22] which is a lengthy discourse delivered, on the duties of man, by Kṛṣṇa who is no other than Viṣṇu. What the words 'bhāgavata', '*sāttvata*', 'vāsu-

13. MBh: Anuśāsana 48
14. ibid., 48
15. MBh: Droṇa 203; Sauptika 17
16. ibid. Droṇa 80; Anuśāsana 203
17. ibid. Droṇa 80
18. Harivaṃśa 134-48
19. MBh : Śānti 350-30, 352-363
20. MBh. Ādi. 1:32.
21. ibid., Śānti. Nārāyanīya section.
22. ibid. Uddyoga.

deva' and others which are supremely meaningful in Vaiṣṇavism', stand for is readily grasped and their importance assessed by a thorough study of this epic. It is not therefore a surprise if the protagonists of Vaiṣṇavism chose to cite profusely the passages from this epic, far more liberally than from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are already admitted in these works as Viṣṇu divinely descended for affording personal relief to the suffering devotees. It is a fact that Viṣṇu's descent as Varāha and Vāmana which were prominent in the Vedic texts had gone to the background, when His descents as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa became prominent in the later stages and this is mainly due to the significance attached to them in these two epics.

The *Mahābhārata* devotes a section called *Nārāyaṇīya* in the *Śāntiparva* to the glorification of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity regarding which it is said, "He is one whose motions are infinite, whose bodies are infinite, who is without end and without beginning, and without middle, whose middle is unmanifest, whose end is unmanifest.........who is beyond the ken of logic or argument, who is unknowable."[23] He is described at times in terms which recall the language of the *Upaniṣads*: "He cannot be seen with the eye, touched with the sense of touch, smelt with the sense of scent, and that is beyond the ken of the sense of taste."[24] Similarly in the *Anugītā* it is declared that "He is without symbols and qualities,"[25] and that it is only those who lock proper understanding that "regard that entity, through their own ignorance, as invested with the properties of knowledge and others."[26] While recognizing thus the transcedent and unknowable aspect of the Supreme Being, emphasized in these writings, their own distinctive approach seems to be that the Being may be known by His devotees. This truth that the Supreme Being reveals Himself to those who are devoted to Him is taught by means of many

23. MBh: Śānti., 339:4.
24. ibid., ibid., 340: 21.
25. ibid., Anugītā. 34: 5.
26. ibid., ibid., 34: 6.

illustrative instances in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. The Supreme Being "incapable of being seen by anyone else... showed Himself to His worshipper King Uparicara" ;[27] but he was invisible to the priest Bṛhaspati who performed the great Aśvamedha sacrifice. On the priest becoming indignant at this, he was told that "He (God) is incapable of being seen either by ourselves or by thee O Bṛhaspati! Only he can see Him to whom He becomes gracious".[28] Ēkata, Dvita, and Trita practised austerities for four thousand years, but they were sent away without a vision of God, with the message; "That great God is incapable of ever being seen by one that is destitute of devotion. (He) can be seen only by those persons that ..... succeed in devoting themselves wholly and solely to Him."[29] It becomes clear then that, though the Supreme Being is transcendent, He is not past human grasp.

It has been said, "When all individual beings and even the aggregate *jīva* (*samaṣṭi*) have gone into dissolution and when *mahat* has become merged into *prakṛti* (from which it is evolved), there is one remaining as the soul of the universe and He is the Lord Nārāyaṇa";[30] again "The God Nārāyaṇa is at the beginning; from Him arises Brahmā"[31]. "Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Deity; from Him was born Brahmā, the four-faced, and from Brahmā arose Rudra".[32] Para Brahman is identified with Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu.[33] The assertion is made that there is no deity superior to Nārāyaṇa.[34] The word '*nārāyaṇa*' is explained as conveying the sense of being the substratum or resting place for men, their belongings and things related to them.[35] Nārāyaṇa is the inner self

---

27. ibid., Śānti. 347 : 12
28. ibid., ibid., 337 : 19.
29. ibid., ibid., 337 : 52, 53.
30. ibid., ibid., 210 : 24.
31. Var. P. 25 : 6.
32. ibid., 90 : 3.
33. MBh. Anugītā. 186 : 9, 10.
34. ibid., Bhīṣma 67: 2.
35. ibid., Anuśāsana 186 : 7.

of all beings.[36] Brahmā and Rudra are ever subordinated to Him whose nature they do not comprehend[37] and whom they worship[38] Nārāyaṇa keeps everything under Him[39] and directs them to carry out his commands. His interest in the well-being of the world and readiness to come to the rescue of Śiva are revealed in the victory which Śiva gained over the three demons. Śiva's chariot could not be drawn against the forces of the demons. So Viṣṇu took the form of bull and dragged the chariot. Śiva got victory. All the deities praised Viṣṇu for this and offered a benediction that He should destroy all the foes.[40] He takes up a body which is not made up of the products of matter.[41] Kṛṣṇa is described to have appeared with four hands when He left the world.[42] Further it is stated "The You, the irresistible, assumed the form of Viṣṇu from that eternal existence (viz., Nārāyaṇa) for the protection of all beings"[43] Brahmā praised Rāma, after Sītā's fire-ordeal, as the all-pervading Nārāyaṇa Himself and having the conch and discus. His identity is then established with the *avataras* of Boar and the Vāmana to which frequent reference are found made in the *Vedas*. He is the inscrutable Brahman, *Puruṣa* and *Puruṣottama*. He is everything, Viṣṇu, Padmanābha and Madhusūdana. He is the first creator of the three worlds. He is the sacrifice. He is found everywhere in all beings. He is thousand-footed, thousand-eyed and has has hundred heads, reminding the description in the first hymn of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*. He supports the entire universe which is His body. Lakṣmī is His consort. He took up the mortal frame to kill Rāvaṇa. Those persons who would be devoted to Him would have their desires fulfilled here and hereafter. At the end, Brahmā refers to this praise as an

---

36. ibid., Śānti. 361 : 14, 15.
37. ibid,, ibid., 210 : 33.
38. ibid., ibid., 350 : 30; *Āśvamedhika*, 118 : 37, 38.
39. ibid , Uddyoga. 67 : 13.
40. Harivaṃśa 3 : 133 : 62 to 83.
41. ibid. Śānti. 206 : 60.
42. ibid., Mausala 5 : 34.
43. Rām : Uttara (Brahmā's words) 101 : 26.

ancient *Itihāsa* perhaps available even before the days of Vālmiki.[44] Soon after the death of Rāvaṇa, Maṇḍōdari laments his passing away by making direct references to Rāma as the great Viṣṇu Himself. He is referred to as the Supreme Self, eternal, beyond the material world and having the marks characteristic of His own. He is ever associaied with Lakṣmi. He has come down for the welfare of the world by taking the human form.[45] In another context, He is referred to as reclining on the ocean and as having produced Brahmā. He took the human form for the welfare of the world.[46] Rāma's identity with Viṣṇu is indisputably attested by Hanumān who said to Sītā that he whom Rāma decided to be killed could not be saved by Brahmā, Śiva or Indra.[47]

These writers, however, are eager to identify their Deity with the Supreme One of the philosophers, so that the Deity when He reveals Himself is made to say, "I am known as *Puruṣa*. Without acts, I am twenty-fifth. Transcending attributes, I am entire and indivisible. I am above all pairs of attributes and freed from all attachments "[48] They are eager to identify Him with everything which symbolises greatness and perfection; for example with the Lords of creation, with the four-faced Brahmā, with the Sun, with the Emperor or King, with Indra and Varuṇa, with the sacrifices and Vedic studies with the Sāṃkhya-yōga, with the syllable '*Om*', with yogic perfections and the like [49] But merely to regard the Deity as thus identical with what is high and significant does not throw light on the individual perfections which constitute His nature.

Besides: "natural" perfections such as infinitude, eternity, unchangeability, omnipotence, and omnipresence which the Deity is expected to have as the Supreme Being of the

---

44, Rām : Yuddha, 120: 13 to 32.

45. ibid., ibid , 114: 14 to 17.

46. ibid., ibid., 104: 4 to 11.

47. Rām: Sundara, 51: 45. Here there is no refercnce to Viṣṇu.

48: MBh: Śānti. 340: 42 ff.

49. ibid., ibid., 339. cf. Anugītā. 54. 7: 10; V.P. 1.8.

philosophers. He has also "spiritual" perfections which may be classified as knowledge, beauty and goodness. That Brahman as thought or the principle of Intelligence, was as it was seen, one of the main doctrines of Upaniṣadic philosophy. That doctrine is always retained in these works. He is spoken of as "only mind" as "Lord of Speech", as "the embodiment of correctness of judgement or reasoning", as identifiable with the wisdom of Sāṃkhya-yoga,[50] as "the Preceptor of the universe",[51] "the highest Intelligence".[52] In the *Āgamas jñāna* or wisdom is spoken of as not merely an attribute of the Supreme Being, but as constituting His very essence,[53] and the *Nārāyaṇiya*, declares that when all things have perished, knowledge remains as the sole companion of the Deity.[54] The beauty of the Deity is indescribable and can be suggested only by means of inadequate analogies. *Anugītā* declares, "The stainless lunar light is thy smile. O thou of eyes like the (petals of the) lotus",[55] and adds that beauty of creatures is really the beauty of the Deity Himself.[56] The ethical perfection of the Deity is proclaimed in no less mistakable terms. The God is perfect in the performance of vows and ceremonies and in yogic restraint. He "has completed all the vows and ceremonies mentioned in the *Vedās*."[57] He practises the "severe and flawless vow of Brahmacarya".[58] He is "the embodiment of one who has not fallen away from Yoga."[59] He establishes law and in order to set the standard of men, conforms to them Himself "The ordinances I set are followed by all the worlds. Those ordinances should always be adored, and it is therefore, I adore them "[60] The *Anugītā* declares,

50. ibid:, ibid., 339; 4.
51: ibid., ibid., 340: 43.
52. ibid:, Anugītā 32: 12.
53. Schrader's *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*, p. 33.
54. MBh. Śānti. 340 :69.
55. ibid., Anugītā 52: 11 and 14.
56. ibid., ibid., 52: 13. 67: 80-86.
57. ibid., Śānti. 339: 4.
58. Bhāg: P. 1.3: 6.
59. MBh. Śānti. 339: 4:
60. ibid;. ibid., 342: 25.

"*Puruṣa* is dependent on goodness......the wise believe in the identity of *Puruṣa* and goodness. There is no doubt in this".[61] Even the very names of the Deity have a sanctifying and cleansing power.[62] The Deity Himself declares, "I have never uttered anything base or anything that is obscene. The divine Sarasvatī who is Truth's self, and is otherwise called by the name of Ṛta, represents my speech and always dwells in my tongue."[63] "I have never swerved from the attribute of sattva (goodness)".[64] 'I always hear words that are pure and holy, O Dhanaṃjaya, and never catch anything that is sinful. Hence I am called by the name of Sucisravas."[65] The discourse of the Deity being ended, the narrator exclaims, "there is nothing holier on earth or in heaven, and nothing higher than Nārāyaṇa. Having listened to this discourse, we feel that we have been cleasnsed of all our sins and sanctified entirely."[66] Perhaps kindness, compassion, learning, conduct, sense-control and self-control which are mentioned as the six-qualities of Rāma[67] represent a prelude to the later development of the *ṣāḍguṇya* aspect of the *Pāñcarātra* system.

Besides these perfections, the Lord is full of Love. He shows infinite tenderness and grace to the sinner. The quality of friendly helpfulness was characteristic of Viṣṇu even in the Ṛg Vedic times where he appears as a friend of Indra helping him in his battles. So also in the *Mahābhārata* as Kṛṣṇa He appears as the special friend of Arjuna, and as Nārāyaṇa, the special friend of Nara. This quality of helpfulness of the Deity has been extolled in the writings of the Vaiṣṇavites. The poems of the Āḷvārs bear testimony to this and it forms the one theme on which the saints love to dwell. In the *Nārāyaṇiya*, the grace and protecting care of God are the themes of many a passage. "Through Nārāyaṇa's grace, King

61. ibid., Anugītā 48: 7 and 9.
62. ibid:, Śānti. 342: 2.
63. ibid., ibid., 343: 73.
64. ibid., ibid., 343: 75.
65. ibid., ibid., 343: 89.
66. ibid., ibid.. 344: 16 and 17.
67. Rām Ayodhya. 33: 12

Vasu Uparicara ascended to heaven to a spot that is even higher than the region of Brahman Himself" [68] and by His grace the King was rescued when cast from heaven by a curse of the Ṛṣis.[69] The God is the "grantor of every wish".[70] His "troops go everywhere for protecting His worshippers"[71] He is "kind to all worshippers", "fond of them", and "ever affectionate towards them."[72] He is "the greatest friend",[73] and "the one sole Refuge of all men"[74]. He dispels the fears of all persons."[75] From Him "springs the attribute of forgiveness".[76] He removes the misery of the humble. He is 'the abode of the wonderful grace'. Thus it is seen that the Supreme Being as revealed in these works is an Infinite and Transcedent Being who is characterised by knowledge, and more by beauty, goodness and love. He is much affected by the distresss of others.[77]

Again it is seen in these works that the relation of God to the embodied souls is one of intense active interest and love. Accordingly. He lays aside His supreme form when necessary and assuming finite forms enters the world for their benefit. The doctrine of divine decent which can be traced from the later Vedic literature is very fully elaborated in these works. While the *Bhagavad-gita* and following it, the *Anugitā*, merely lay down the doctrine of repeated decents, other works enumerate in detail all the descents of the Deity in the past, as well as any still to come, and also narrate the circumstances and purpose of each descent. In the *Nārāyaṇiya* the Deity is said to assume the

68. MBh: Śānti; 337: 61, 62.
69. ibid;, ibid., 339.
70. ibid., ibid', 339: 4. cf. V.P. 1.12: 42.
71. ibid., ibid., 339: 4.
72. ibid,, ibid., 339: 4; 344: 53 and 54.
73, ibid., ibid., 339: 4.
74. ibid., ibid.. 342: 39.
75. ibid., ibid , 347; 17.
76. ibid., ibid., 345: 6:
77. Rām. Ayodhya. 2: 40.

form of a boar to bring back the Earth from the waters 'for the good of all creatures;[78] as a man-lion to slay Hiraṇyakaśipu for the benefit of the deities;[79] as Āditya to defeat the asura who appropriates the sovereignty of the universe from the deities;[80] as Rāma of the race of Bhṛgu to exterminate the Kṣatriyas who becomes proud and arrogant;[81] as Rāma son of Daśaratha, to slay the Lord of the Rākṣasas, that "thorn of all the worlds"[82]; as Kṛṣṇa to slay Kaṃsa, and the innumerable Dānavas who will be as "thorns in the sides of the deities" and all such as have done some form of injury or other to others.[83] He with Arjuna will consume a large number of Kṣatriyas "for doing good to the world" and in these various ways will lighten the burden of the earth.[84] It is to be noticed here how the interest is fixed in all this in God's desire to do good to these whom He loves. It is seen in the *Gītā* that Righteousness is emphasized as the chief motive of divine descent; Love occupies the chief place here.

The Universe with all celestial and terrestrial beings is a real something which needs to be explained in relation to the Supreme Being. Creation is an evolution or development from one stage to another. It is, according to this theory as J.C. Chatterji puts it, "a process which, while bringing the product into existence leaves the source of the product unchanged."[85] The Supreme Being is thus regarded as being quite unaffected by the changes which are necessary to bring about the universe. He is the unchanging one, who, through unchanging, is the explanation of all change. Further, the many stages which are postulated between God and the universe seem to make less difficult

---

78. MBh. Śānti. 340: 74.
79. ibid., ibid., 340: 76.
80. ibid., ibid., 340: 79.
81. ibid., ibid., 340: 81.
82. ibid., ibid., 340: 85.
83. ibid., ibid., 340: 86, 87.
84. ibid., ibid., 340: 97, 98.
85. *Kashmir Saivism*, p.59.

the transition from God to universe, which is so different from Him in character. In this way an effort is made to relate to God a world which appears far removed from Him in nature. It is therefore easy to understand how "as the light and heat are stronger or feebler as we are near to the fire, or far off from it, so the energy of the Supreme Being is more or less manifest in the beings that they are more or less remote from Him."[86] "In Him is the whole world interwoven; and from Him, and in Him, is the universe; and He, the Supreme Lord of all, comprising all that is perishable and imperishable, bears upon Him all material and spiritual existence, identified in nature with His ornaments and weapons."[87]

The Divine transcendence and perfection of the Lord may seem incompatible with His being an active agent in relation to the universe. This incompatibility is overcome by a mythological account in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section and in the *Purāṇās*, according to which the Deity Himself does not do this work, but commissions Brahmā, who spontaneously rises out of Him, to create and superintend the universe.[88] To preserve the supremacy of the Deity, Brahmā is regarded as obtaining from the Divine Being the intelligence necessary for his task, as well as his great commission[89] which is dramatically expressed in the *Nārāyaṇīya* thus: "Do thou, O Brahman, duly think of the courses of acts which creatures are to follow. Thou art the great ordainer of all created beings. Thou art the master and lord of the universe. Placing this burden on Thee, I shall be free from anxiety."[90] And it is said that "Having unveiled to the Creator of the cosmos the objects that had to be evolved, that Prime Person furnished with a lotus navel vanished in His native form,[91] and adopted

86. V.P. 1.22: 56, 57.
87. ibid.; 1.22: 64, 65.
88. ibid., 1.4
89. cf. MBh. Śānti. 350: 16 to 27.
90. ibid., ibid , 341: 89.
91. cf. Bhāg. P. 8.6: 26

the course of actionless *nivṛtti*[92] or yogic sleep.[93] Again it is asserted that Brahmā who created and superintends the universe, is after all none other than the Supreme Being Himself. "The same transcendent Lord, assuming the three qualities of matter – purity, energy and dullness – wears for the purpose of creation, preservation and destruction, the different designations of Hari, Viriñci (Brahmā) and Hara"[94] and Brahmā, speaking to an enquirer, declares, "Myself, Thyself.. and all other creatures.. are the manifestations of that *Puruṣa*.. As the sun illumines its own orbit as well as the outer world, so the universal form of the Great God manifests itself and exhibits all inner and outer objects.[95] The heaven, moon, sun, stars, sky, directions, earth and the seas are borne by the might of Vāsudeva.[96] Being the source of time, He is not affected by it.[97] Nothing could be said to be eternally existent except the self which is none other than Himself.[98] Thus the theories of evolution, of *vyūhas* and of the creator–Brahmā are the attempts to relate the Supreme Being to the universe.

The love of the deity according to these works, not only leads Him to assume finite forms for the sake of His worshippers, but also actively to concern Himself in seeking to free them from *saṃsāra*. It functions as Grace, leading the soul in numerous ways to Release. It "awakens" the soul. "That person, whom Nārāyāṇa looks on with compassion, succeeds in becoming awakened. No one, O king, can become awakened through his own wishes."[99] It sometimes deprives a man of wealth and friends in order to wean him from attachment to the finite.[100] It leads the Deity to reveal Himself, His attributes and His purpose to the devotee, in order "to

92. MBh. Śānti. 340: 64 and 65.
93. ibid.. ibid., 341: 45 ane 46.
94. Bhāg. P. 1.2:
95. ibid.; 2.6:
96. MBh. Anugītā. 254: 136.
97. ibid., Śānti. 196: 9.
98. ibid., ibid.: 347: 32.
99. MBh: Śānti. 349: 75 and 76.
100. Bhāg. P. 10.88: 8.

set a keener edge" on the eagerness of the devotee, and to arouse in him "a holy yearning" after Him. It preserves the faith of the devotees so that it may never flinch. It is also stated in these works that though the Deity works for the salvation of the individual the individual, also has his own role to play. "Hari never casts a kind eye upon the person subject to birth (and death), that is endowed with such a mixed nature" as that which partakes of *rajas* and *tamas* [101] Salvation, therefore, though entirely dependent upon Nārāyaṇa[102] is conditioned by the soul renouncing the evil qualities of *rajas* and *tamas*, and pursuing the good qualities of *sattva*, for "emancipation is regarded as made up of the attribute of *sattva*."[103] "The grace of God is the crown and consumption of religious duties piously practised."[104] Other qualities such as knowledge and yogic practice are also mentioned as requried before the Deity can grant release, but above all is demanded the devotion of one's own soul to Nārāyaṇa.[105] "without doubt, the religion of devotion seems to be superior (to that of knowledge) and is very dear to Nārāyaṇa. The end that is attained by a Brahmin who attending to due observances, study the *Vedas* with the *Upaniṣads*.. ...and by those that adopt the religion of *yatis* (ascetics), is inferior, I think, to that attained by person devoted to Hari with their whole souls."[106]

The unique significance of the *Rāmāyaṇa* consists in the Deity offering Himself as the refuge for those who are in distress and are destitutes. Rāma is referred to as dear to those who seek shelter under Him.[107] Sītā assures security to those who have erred and she offers her endeavour *(puruṣakāra)* in this connection to every one.[108] However, she restrains herself to respect Rāma's greatness when she could have herself

101. MBh. Śānti. 349. 76 and 77.
102. ibid., ibid , 349: 70.
103. ibid., ibid., 349: 70.
104. Bhāg. P. 1.2:
105. MBh. Śānti. 349: 74.
106. ibid., ibid., 349: 4, 5.
107. Rām: Sundara. 21: 20; Yuddha 120: 18; Kiṣkindha 15: 19.
108. ibid., ibid., 58: 90; Yuddha. 116: 40, 44.

punished Rāvaṇa.[109] The acts of offering shelter by Rāma to Vibhīṣaṇa[110] and the crow[111] are to well-known and need no recounting here. All the aspects of the act of self-surrender are discussed in detail with reference to these two incidents by Vedānta Deśika in his *Abhayapradānasāra.*

Hanumān, who was an embodiment of devotion to Rāma, asked Rāma when the latter was about to leave the world, for being ever devoted to Him.[112] As a sincere devotee, he feels as a mortal that he could not control himself and hence his desire to have unflinching and unswerving devotion to Him. Rāma readily granted this request.[113]

However much a scholar be well-equipped and deeply learned in the inner meaning of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, one cannot sufficiently bring out the importance of this work and even after one makes substantial contribution to the interpretation of it, he very often feels not satisfied with his work. The general tenor of the exposition of the inner meaning is that Rāma represents Viṣṇu, Sītā represents Lakṣmī and Lakṣmaṇa, the self who is devoted to both[114]. From Lakṣmaṇa's[115] there has sprung the beautiful concept of kaiṅkarya which became the fundamental doctrine of the preachings of the Ālvārs. It is even contended that Bharata represents the role of a devotee and Śatrughna that of the devotee of the devotee.

The self is helpless and ignorant. Its suffering and freedom from it are at the will of the Lord.[116] When the Lord's glance is set on a child at the time of its birth, it

109. ibid., idid., 22: 20.
110. ibid. Yuddha. 18 and 19.
111. ibid., Sundara. 38.
112. ibid., Uttara. 40: 15.
113. ibid., Uttara: 40: 19 to 23.
114. cf. ibid., Ayodhya. 11: 1.
115: ibid., ibid.. 31: 21, 25; 115: 27; Āraṇya 15: 7.
116. MBh. Śānti. 12: 36.

becomes *sāttvika*.[117] The only means of getting relief from the sufferings here and hereafter lies only in seeking shelter under Him and surrendering one's self only at His feet [118] He is impartial and is a father and mother to the people [119] One salutation offered to Him would bestow upon him who does it the results which he would get by performing ten horse-sacrifices.[120] One can know Him through *mantras*, which, however, is a harder process and will not be within the reach of all persons.[121] One should realize that whatever is offered, according to the Vedic rules, reaches His feet [122] This concept should have developed into the act of doing worship *(arcana)* at the feet of the Deity. One who has taken shelter under Him shall reside there where elders of upright conduct are worshipped, where there is no loss of *dharma*, and where the Vedic study, sacrifices, penances, truth, sense-control, non-injury and non-offence to the pious progress unobstructedly.[123] Devotees shall not offend each other and if they do, they would not get any relief even in sacred places.[124] Such persons have nothing for themselves and as such look upon Him as their sole guide [125] They would be freed from danger, envy, evil thoughts and avarice.[126] Bhīṣma offers his homage to them who salute Varāha, one of the divine descents of Viṣṇu.[127] He is to be worshipped through *sāttavika* mode.[128]

To enter into Brahman and become merged in Him is more to be desired than all other ends.[129] The details of such

117. ibid., ibid., 276: 2.
118. ibid., Anuśāsana. 142: 59 to 61; Aśvamedha 96: 44, 45.
119. ibid., Vana. 192: 56.
120. idid:, śānti. 46: 123, cf. *Viṣṇudharma*. 1: 18.
121. ibid,. ibid., 276: 2.
122. ibid., ibid., 353: 63.
123. Bhāg. P. 11. 29: 10.
124. MBh. śānti. 336: 36.
125. ibid., ibid., 350: 34.
126. ibid., Anuśāsana, 254: 135.
127. ibid., Śānti. 46: 130.
128. ibid., Bhīśma. 66: 39, 40.
129. MBh. Śānti. 335: 42 and 43.

entering and merging are also stated. The elements involved in this process are thus described. "The path that is theirs...... that are stainless . is fraught with auspiciousness and felicity. Sūrya (Sun), who is the dispeller of the darkness of all the worlds, is said to be the door (through which the emancipate must pass). Entering Sūrya, the bodies of such persons become consumed by the fire. They then become invisible for after that they cannot be seen by anybody at any time. Reduced into invisible atoms, they then enter into Nārāyaṇa (who resides in the centre of Sūrya). Passing out from Him also, they enter into the form Aniruddha. Losing all physical attributes together and transformed into Mind alone they then enter into Pradyumna. Passing out of Pradyumna, those foremost of regenerate persons......then enter into Saṇkarṣaṇa who is otherwise called Jīva. After this, divested of the three primal attributes of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*, those foremost of regenerate beings quickly enter the Supreme Soul otherwise called *Kṣetrajña*, and which itself transcends the three primal attributes. Know that Vāsudeva is He called *Kṣetrajña*. Verily shouldst thou know that Vāsudeva is the abode or original refuge of all things in the universe."[130] The stages of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, and Saṅkarṣana through which the soul passes before it enters into Vāsudeva, the Supreme Being, are readily recognized as the same as those gone through in the evolution of the individual soul and the material universe from the Supreme Being, the order being reversed because the process now described is the return of the soul to God.[131]

The description of the emancipated beings found in the White Island (Śvetadvīpa) suggests that though souls released from *saṃsāra* are very similar to the Deity in their effulgence, glory and freedom from material qualities, they are quite distinct from Him, and are engaged in devout worship and adoration of Him. "We beheld a number of men of auspicious features. All of them were white and looked like the

130. ibid., ibid. 345: 13 to 18.

131. This bears the inflence of the Upaniṣadic teaehing. Vide: Ch. Up: 4. 15; 5, 6; Br. Up. 6.2: 15, 16; Bhag. P. 3.32.

moon, and possessed every mark of blessedness. Their hands were always joined in prayer. They were engaged in silently thinking on Brahman". The effulgence that was emitted by each of these men resembled the splendours which Sūrya assumes when the time comes for the dissolution of the universe."[132] They are divested of senses. They do not subsist on any kind of food."[133] "Worshippers of that foremost of all beings, they are devoted to Him with their whole souls. They all enter that eternal and illustrious Deity of a thousand rays".[134] The fact that such "emancipated ones" are said as in this passage to "enter" or, as in other passages,[135] to be "competent to enter" the Supreme being, shows that although emancipation was not regarded as the same as entering into the Deity, still it was assumed to lead to such a consummation. An all but pictorial representation of a soul entering the Deity is given in one place[136] where it is said that the soul "piercing through the firmament, entered into Sūrya's disc. Mingling then with Sūrya's energy, he seemed to be transformed into Sūrya's self. When the two energies thus met together, we were so confounded that we could not any longer distinguish which was which "[137] From this it is clear that though the soul becomes practically identical with the Deity, making it impossible for us to distinguish it from the Deity, it is not entirely identical with Him. This general impression is confirmed by the earlier part of this section, which reads, "The Divine Sūrya is the refuge or home of innumerable wonders. Innumerable *munis* (saints), crowded with ascetic success, together with all the deities, reside in the rays of Sūrya like birds perching on the branches of trees."[138] Thus *Nārāyaṇīya* consistently holds that the soul attains to a closer unity with the Deity. It is to be assmed that these thinkers regarded the soul in Release are attaining very close union with the Deity.

132. MBh. Śānti., 337: 32, 33 and 35.
133. ibid., ibid., 337; 28.
134. ibid:, ibid., 337: 27.
135. ibid.. ibid., 340: 20, 125; 341: 8.
136. ibid., ibid.. 363: 11 to 18.
137. ibid., ibid:, 363: 16 and 17. cf. Kaṭh. Up. 3.2: 9; Sv. Up. 1:7.
138. ibid.. 363: 2, 3.

There is a collection of *Itihāsās* that goes by the name *Itihāsasamuccaya*. It contains much material that lends support to the ideals contained in the two epics which glorify Vaiṣṇavism. The two syllables, '*ha*' '*ri*', when uttered even once paves the way for obtaining *mokṣa* [139] This does not however confer on such persons who utter them any licence to be wayward in their behaviour and commit acts which offend established codes of good conduct.[140] However, following these codes and performing the sacred rites such as *Aśvamedha* and *Vājpeyā*, without devotion to Nārāyaṇa do not entitle them to qualify themselves for obtaining *mokṣa*.[141] A devotee of God whatever be his social standing, shall not be offended and the offender though an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu, goes only to hell[142]. Hence the devotees should be pleased in order to please God.[143] External marks and appendages like the triple staff and others of an ascetic do not proclaim their possessor to be virtuous, if he is not devoted to Viṣṇu, for even the cruel, evil-minded and heinous sinners get the goal by resorting to Nārāyaṇa.[144] The devotees of Viṣṇu become freed from their sins and so purify the world.[145] The act of expiation for any sinful deed committed lies in recollecting Hari [146] That it Kurukṣetra, Naimiṣa and Puṣkara where one lives with sense-control.[147] Finally, it must be said that the two epics[148] contain some references to temples and deities there. Ill omens are said to have appeared in the temples

---

139. Narasimha P. 54: 58 to 62
140. V.P. 3.8: 9 to 19.
141. Iti. Sam, 33: 180.
142. ibid., 12: 71; 27: 26.
143. ibid., 27: 27.
144. ibid., 33: 123, 124. cf. Bhāg. P. 7.7: 51, 52.
145. ibid., 27: 25.
146. V.P. 2.6: 38 tō 40.
147. Iti. Sam. 27: 18
148. Rām. Ayodhya 6:4, 8. ibid., Yuddha. 131: 90. This is taken as a veiled reference to Śrī Ranganatha. Vide, Tilaka on ibid.

which portended disaster when the Pāṇḍavas left Hastināpura for exile [149]

The *Purāṇas* had profoundly influenced Vaiṣṇavism in its rich development both on the philosophical and religious sides. The role which they played could be said to have been of as much significant as the two epics, if not greater. The concepts and ideals of philosophy and religion as are found in the Vedic literature had come down to the Purāṇic literature, as to the epics. It is but natural that the trend of treatment of the subjects and concepts dealt with should be identical even in phraseology. Besides, the *vyūha* doctrine and Āgamic traditions had penetrated in these to such an extent that a separate treatment cannot be given to the Purāṇic contribution to the utter exclusion of their influences. Leaving aside the treatment of matters which had been handled alike by all these sources, it would be possible to lay emphasis on the unique place of the Purāṇic influence on Vaiṣṇavism.

Theistic tendencies such as faith in the personal deity who is a father unto mankind, concept of God as creator, preserver and destroyer, and of soul, its individuality subject to God's free will, the paths of devotion and self-surrender, belief in the divine descents of Viṣṇu and the glorification of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma to a greater degree when compared with others are the fundamental aspects of the influence exerted by the *Purāṇas* on the development of Vaiṣṇavism.

Much of the contents of the *Purāṇas* could be said to be saturated with the spirit of sectarianism of Viṣṇu and Śiva but even here it is seen that some of the *Purāṇas* are not sectarian [150]. There is a large number of episodes and narratives which glorify certain observances (*vratas*) and holy places. The exact period of their finding room in the *Purāṇas* cannot be fixed for want of evidences. At any rate, the absence of

149. MBh. Sabhā. 102. 33.

150. *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Bhaviṣya Purāṇas*, though they are dedicated to to Brahmā, do not have any sectarian tinge.

such references in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* would point out to the latter addition of them in these *Purāṇas*.[151]

Vaiṣṇavism, as handed down traditionally, relies more on the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇudharma* and only to a less degree on the *Bhāgavata*, *Padmottara*, *Varāha*, *Nārada*, *Nāradīya* or *Bṛhannāradiya*, *Garuḍa*, *Brahma*, *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Vāmana* and *Liṅga Purāṇas*. While depicting the life of Kṛṣṇa, more reliance is placed on the *Harivaṃśa* which is a supplement to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. The *Bhāgavata* is not cited for the treatment of Kṛṣṇa's life, but only for a general treatment of devotion and of the conduct of the devotees.

The *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, which is held to be the *Purāṇaratna*[152] answers to all the characteristics which a *Purāṇa* is expected to contain.[153] It may be no exaggeration to suppose that this definition of the *Purāṇa* was framed keeping this *Purāṇa* as the *lakṣya grantha*. It is cited as an authentic text for Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil epic *Maṇimekalai*[154] (Second Century A.D.)[155] revealing its antiquity.[156] It serves therefore as an ideal *upabrāhmaṇa*, supplement to the Vedic literature. The *Bhāgavata* which is not cited either by Śaṅkara or by Rāmānuja is hailed as containing the essence of the teachings of Vedānta.[157] It is said to contain in the *śloka* form the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*.[158] The prayer and praise offered to Viṣṇu by the elephant Gajendra are modelled after the Upaniṣadic pattern.[159]

151. cf. Agni. P. Ch 230 (omens) Gar. P. Ch. 47; (Building of mansions)
152. *Śtotraratna*. 4.
153. V.P. 3.6: 24.
154. *Maṇimekalai*, 27 line 98; see the commentary on this line (Kaḻakam edition).
155. *Tamil Moli Ilakkiya Varalāṟu* p. 297
156. The mention of certain dynasties such as Naiṣadha and Guptas (V.P. 4.24: 54 to 69) which flourished in the post-Christian era will have to be treated as later interpolation.
157. Bhāg. P. 12. 13: 15.
158. This is according to the commentator Śrīdhara for 10. 87: 14 to 41.
159. Bhāg. P. 8.3: 2 to 29.

The Supreme being according to these *Purāṇas* is Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī; the two are never separated.[160] Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu are identical.[161] He is called Bhagavān[162] and Vāsudeva.[163] His qualities are countless[164], but six among them are prominent.[165] They are knowledge, power, strength, supremacy, valour and splendour. He is absolutely free from defects or features which are to be avoided.[166] He has two forms, namely, visible and invisible [167] The visible one is His own form.[168] The world represents His mobile form. The former is also called *Śabda Brahman*,[169] as it could be intuited through the *Vedas*, *Vedāṅgas*, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* which represent verbal testimony. The knowledge of this form is called *ādhyātmika*. All antitheses such as having no body, and no sense organ[170] but moving, tasting, hearing and seeing are applicable only to this form This form is not known to any one [171] The visible form is taken up mainly to preserve *dharma*. Here the visible form must be taken to refer to the body which the Lord takes up.[172] Such a concept like this leads to the formulation of the theory that everything is God [173] All these are of the nature of Nārāyaṇa [174] He takes up the body at his free will[175] which is not the product

160. V.P. 1.8: 17, 35; 1.9: 142 to 145; 10.89: 9 to 12.
161 *Harivaṃśa* 3.88: 43, 44.
162. V.P. 6.5: 79.
163. ibid., 6.5: 80, 82.
164. Vām. P. 74· 40.
165 V.P. 6.5: 79, 85.
166. ibid., 6.5: 79; 1 22: 53; 5.1: 47 cf. Vām. P. 74: 40.
167. ibid., 1.22: 55.
168. ibid., 1.22: 56.
169. ibid., 5.1: 35 to 50 6.5: 61; to 69.
170. The ślokas 39 to 49 remind the passages of the *Upaniṣads* such as Sv. Up. 3: 8, 29.
171. V.P. 1.4 17.
172. V.P. 5.1: 50.
173. ibid., 1.9: 69 to 74; 2.12: 38 to 40, 43.
174. ibid., 5.1: 29, 30.
175. ibid., 6.5: 84.

of matter.[176] Even gods worship this visible form.[177] He bears these forms as a self does his body and so He is the self of all those things which He bears.[178] He bears not only the inanimate things but also the selves.[179] It can therefore be said that He exists in five ways, namely, through the elements, senses, matter, self and Supreme Self.[180] Like the self which controls the body, He controls, being the self, the entire thing which is distinct from Him.[181] For the welfare of the world, He becomes this body which is graphically represented as adorned with ornaments and weapons.[182] All the things including selves are brought under these two heads. The self is the *Kaustubha* gem for Him.[183] The entire world is said to constitute His prosperity[184] which is not affected by time. He gets into a particular body and carries out His desire.[185]

He is the Supreme Deity and has full control over all others such as Brahmā and Rudra who are said to have been caught in the worldly delusion.[186] He is in the heart of the entire world and as such He alone can have control over others.[187] Therefore He alone shall be fit to be worshipped.[188] He is the only refuge for humanity.[189] So not only for final release but for any other benefit such as physical health, material wealth, pleasures that are incidently available.[190]

176. Var. P. 34: 40.
177. V.P. 1.19: 80.
178 ibid., 1.19 : 83; 1.22: 65; *Harivāṃśa* 3.34 : 19 to 21.
179. ibid., 6.7 : 53 to 59; 2.13: 2.
180. ibid., 5.18 : 50.
181. ibid., 2.6 : 8.
182. ibid., 1.22 : 67 to 77.
183. ibid., 1.22 : 68.
184. ibid., 4.1 : 84.
185. *Viṣṇudharma* 108 : 50.
186. V.P. 5.30 : 17.
187. ibid., 1.17 : 20.
188 *Viṣṇudharma* 2.14 : 8, 28; *Harivāmśa* 3.89 : 8, 9.
189. ibid , 1.59,
190. *Viṣṇudharma* 43 : 46 ; 74 : 43.

He alone should be sought after and not Brahmā and Rudra.[191] When He is pleased, there is nothing that is not attainable.[192] From Him, the world rises, remains with Him and merges in Him.[193] He pervades the universe through His power[194] Sage Bhṛgu is said to have realized the supremacy of Viṣṇu over other deities.[195]

The *Nārāyaṇīya* and the *Anugītā* mention nothing about the existence of souls prior to *saṃsāra*. But the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* incline to the view that souls exist eternally, and therefore prior to creation, in a subtle form within the Deity in one of His aspects. "When this universe was under waters at the time of dissolution, the Deity alone reposed on His mighty serpent couch: His eyes were closed though He did not do away with the power of understanding ..And although He had placed within His person all incorporeal bodies, He sent the energy of Time to arouse Him again at the time of creation...Sleeping for four *yugas*, and thousands of years with His own created energy He espied within His person all those creatures".[196] "All this world was derived from Thee. As the wide-spreading *Nyagrodha* (Indián fig) tree is compressed in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is comprehended in Thee as its germ."[197] This view also is conformable to the doctrine, that the rudiments of plants exist in their cotyledons. According to these two works, the soul exists even prior to creation, as some thing externally distinct, although it exists only in the Supreme Being and is completely dependent on Him. It would appear that the individual self is pervaded by the Supreme Being as its soul or principle of consciousness. He seems at times to usurp the place of the individual self. Nevertheless, the fact that the embodied self suffers from

191. MBh. Sānti. 350 : 19, 36.
192. V.P. 1.12 : 79; 1.17 : 91.
193. ibid., 1.1 31 cf. ibid 1.2 : 4.
194. ibid., 1.4 : 38.
195. Bhāg. P. 10.89 : 9 to 12.
196. Bhag. P. 3.8 :
197. V.P. 1.12 : 66, 67.

many evils seems to have prevented from completely identifying the individual with the Supreme Self. The *Nārāyaṇīya* and the *Purāṇas* regard the embodied individual as suffering from imperfections. The problem has therefore to be faced in what relation the Deity stands to these imperfections if He exists within the individual as his Soul. Here the Sāṁkhyan conception of the *Puruṣa* who is spectator or Witness merely and not Agent helps to clear the way. "The one *Puruṣa*...transcends all *Puruṣas* and is invisible. The many *Puruṣas* that exist in the universe constitute the basis upon which that one *Puruṣa* stands. Though divested of body, He dwells in every body. Though dwelling again in bodies, He is never touched by the acts accomplished by those bodies. He is my inner Soul. He is thy inner Soul. He is the all-seeing Witness dwelling within all embodied creatures and engaged in making their acts."[198]

Whenever there is distress for the gods, they invariably go to Brahmā who takes them to Viṣṇu who reclines on the serpent in the milky ocean which is part of the material world. This place is taken up by the Lord so as to be within the easy access of His devotees.[199] From this it is made clear that the Lord has invested with His devotees the responsibility for the realization of their incapacity to solve their problems and for appealing to Him for help. The *Purāṇas* contain references to the *vyūha* doctrine and there is free admixture of the Upaniṣadic concepts of God and of the *vyūha* concepts.[200]

The mysterious powers of God could not be easily assessed. Even Ādiśeṣa who always sings in praise of His great qualities, could not recount them.[201] This idea appears to have found the basis for the doctrine of divine descent which is regarded as the central pivot round which revolve the other theories of the Bhāgavata cult.[202] The descent of the

198. MBh. Śānti. 351 : 25 ; 352 : 6 cf. ibid., 352 : 14 and V.P. 1.19 : 117.
199. V.P. 1.9: 38; 5 1: 31.
200. ibid., 5.18: 58; *Harivaṃśa* 2.3.
201. Bhāg. P. 2.7: 40, 1.1: 13, 17; 11.4 2.
202. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata* Vol. I. p. 175.

Lord is of three kinds, namely *amśa*, *kalā* and *amśakalā*. The first kind represents such descents like Yajña,[203] Vāmana and others where all the powers of God are not required to be revealed. The second type refers to souls who are born in the world with the divinity of God enshrined in them.[204] Vyāsa,[205] Gaya[206] and others would serve to illustrate this kind. The third kind is represented by the admixure of human and divine elements as in the case of Ṛṣabha.[207]

The descents of Nārāyaṇa could also be considered to be due to the qualities and sport. Those which are based on the qualities are called *guṇāvatāras*[208] as represented by the *vyūhas* which are 'revealed in the isolated corner of an individuals's mind'.[209] That which is based on the sportive aspect of descent is called *Līlāvatāra*[210] which is taken up for the benefit and desire of the devotees.[211] A *Līlāvatāra* behaves like an ordinary mortal just to win over the confidence and thereby to instil into us the ideals of life '[212] The purpose of *Līlāvatāra* is said to destroy those who are working against the interest of the world and to protect *dharma*.[213] The divine sport of Kṛṣṇa is coordinated with Viṣṇu's immanent and transcendent natures.[214]

203. Bhāg. P. 8.1: 18; 8.17: 23; *Harivaṃśa* 1.53: 8, 9; 54, 13.
204. ibid., 4.14: 22 cf. ibid., 1.3: 27.
205. ibid., 9.22: 21.
206. ibid., 95.15; 9.
207. ibid., 11.4: 17. cf. ibid., 1.3: 28.
208. Bhāg. P. 3.7: 28.
209. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata* Vol. I, p. 185.
210. Bhāg. P. 2.6: 45.
211. ibid., 4.7: 24; 7.9: 38; 10.59: 25.
212. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata* Vol. I, p.185. 186. cf. Bhāg. P. 5.19: 5.
213. Bhāg. P. 7.9: 38. cf. ibid, 1.10: 25, Twenty-four *Līlāeatāras* are mentioned in 2.7. For an estimate of this, vide: *A study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, pp.23-30.
214. Bhāg. P. 7.9: 13.

The *Purāṇas* add to the list of the Lord's descents given in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. There are no less than four lists of *avatāras* in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* numbering as many as twenty-two;[215] but one of the lists[216] admits that the *avatāras* are really "numberless". The *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* distinguish themselves in their elaboration of the *Kṛṣṇāvatāra* among the cow-herds of Mathurā.[217] The tenth book of the latter which is the longest and the most popular section of that work is devoted entirely to the birth, life, amours and miraculous deeds of Kṛṣṇa among the herdsmen and herdswomen of Mathurā.[218] The significance of this theory of divine descent seems to be to establish peace and social concord among the worshippers of different gods. He who worships the Deity in the form of Boar is a worshipper of Viṣṇu no less than he who worships the high-souled Kṛṣṇa. All are in the end worshippers of the same Deity and accordingly there is no room for sectarian animosity. Again it is generally believed that the being which is descended is a portion of, or an emanation from, the Supreme Being. Thus it is declared, "He who is the soul of all......descends in a small portion of His essence to establish righteousness below,"[219] and speaking of the descent of the Deity as Kṛṣṇa and his brother, Saṅkarṣaṇa, declares," the Supreme Lord plucked off two hairs, one white and one black", and said to the gods, "These my hairs shall descend upon earth, and shall relieve her of the burden of her distress,"[220] which indicates that the beings which descend are a small portion of the Supreme Being. This is generally conceded by the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* also, which after enumerating the twenty-two descents of the Deity, declare, "All these are either portions or emanations from the Person" but makes an exception in the case of Kṛṣṇa-descent and adds, "But Kṛṣṇa is the Lord Himself."[221]

215. Bhāg. P. 1.3; 2.7; 6.8; 1.4.
216. ibid., 1.3.
217. V.P. 5; Bhāg. P: 10th Skandha.
218. Periyāl. Tm. from 1.2 to 3.6 could be thought of as having been modelled after this section of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.
219. cf. V.P. 5.1: 3 to 50.
220. ibid,, 5,1: 59, 60. p. 1(
221. Bhāg. P. 1.3: 1.

The real basis for Viṣṇu's divine descent is thus affording relief to the suffering humanity by removing personally the obstacles which the good people have to face. Viṣṇu came therefore to be looked upon as a benign and sovereign personality. It is but natural that other deities were treated as occupying an inferior status. Rather, they were treated as His mere shadows.[222] This attitude towards Him gave Him the appellation Greater Personality (*Puruṣa*) to distinguish Him from other deities. This explains the identification of Viṣṇu with *Puruṣa* whose hymn brought all the animate and inanimate beings under His being.[223] Viṣṇu became the store house of the 'sublimity and majesty of all the gods'[224] who, though having their individuality, were treated like ordinary persons. Though Viṣṇu behaved like men of the world, He retained His original character.

One noteworthy feature of the *avatāra* doctrine is that while the Lord takes a particular form and is making use of it for the welfare of His devotees, He employs some other form of His in helping them in a different capacity. The Lord took the shape of the tortoise and supported the Mandara mountain which was used as the churning rod. He was on the side of the gods assuming a different form and pulled the body of Vāsuki which was serving as a rope twined round the Mandara mountain. He did this by standing along with the gods. He did the same along with the demons taking up a different form. He was infusing His energy into the mountain, Vāsuki and gods.[225]

It is but natural that the path of devotion is recommended in the *Purāṇas* as the most sure and easiest mode of winning the Lord who is ever ready to come within the reach of the mortals. Association with men of good conduct is said to arouse the feeling of devotion among the mortals.[226] Devotion is a discipline (*yoga*) of the spiritual kind which is based on the Upaniṣadic principles of detachment. The

222. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* Vol. I, pp. 187, 188.
223. Bhāg. P. 2.6: 13 to 16; cf. *Harivaṃśa* 3.47; 27.33.
224. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* Vol. I, p.189.
225. V.P. 1.9: 88 to 91.
226. Bhāg. P. 11.11: 25; 12.12: 2, 3, 5 to 8.

advance made here over what the *Upaniṣads* preach lies in the dedication of the self to God by itself.[227] The self shall offer itself and what belongs to itself also.[228] It is only then that the doer would become alive to the fact that the material world has no bearing on his spiritual development. The efforts made, after that, would enable him to reap the benefits of his efforts. Anything that is thought or spoken or done and surrendered to Nārāyaṇa is considered to have spiritual significance.[229] Here are included socio-religious services like the construction of a temple or the digging of a tank.[230]

Even though people become devotees of God, they differ from each other owing to the disparity in their temperaments. Those who intend to do injury, to play tricks or to show their jealousy and work hastily towards that end are of the tāmasic kind. To the rājasic kind belong those who adore the idols of God seeking fame and supremacy in the material world. Those who surrender their deeds to Him, having done them because of the obligation are sāttvikas.[231] Again it may be pointed out here that a devotee of Viṣṇu is one who bows to Hari, who observes his duties scrupulously, behaves alike to foe and friend, thinks deeply of Him, whose disaffection to the material wealth is revealed by his treating gold as straw, who is clear minded, is free from envy, is quiet and is of good conduct. His words are good and pleasing.[232] He utters always the names of God such as *Kamalanayana* (*Thāmaraik-kaṇṇan*), Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu, Dharaṇī-dhara, Acyuta, Śaṇkhacakrapāṇi etc. Yama's servants would not lay their hands on him.[233] He is convinced that he would not be let

---

227. Bhāg. P. 7.6: 26.
228. ibid., 11.3: 28.
229. ibid., 11.2: 36; V.P. 2.6: 37.
230. ibid., 7.15: 48, 49.
231. ibid., 3.29, 7. 10.
232. V.P. 3.7: 18, 20 to 27.
233. ibid., 3.7: 33.

down by God. The evil effects of the past deeds accrued to his credit would be completely wiped off for which he has only to offer Him the flowers of devotion.[234] For him, in whose heart Hari dwells, the Kali age is Kṛtayuga and conversely the Kṛta age would become Kaliyuga for him who does not devote himself to God.[235] God too would not take His abode in the heart that is spoiled by passion.[236] An ardent devotee, when insulted by another with the use of harsh expressions would only bow his head to him and reply in a calm way.[237]

The Lord could be pleased by the selves through making soms offerings which are metaphorically conceived as flowers. A devotee shall not cause injury to any one. He shall have control over his sense organs. Compassion must be shown to all beings. Forbearance, when there is room for provocation, shall be practised and stress is laid on the practice of this virtue. Correct knowledge of God and self is very much required. Penance shall be practised in the form of religious observances such as fasts, prayers and others. This meaning for this word is suggested by the need to make the physical frame endure certain stresses and restrictions in order to make it remain controlled. Meditation on God is another act which is treated here as a flower. Uttering truth is the eighth flower. When practised, these are held to play the role of flowery offerings. In a way, one can see in the practice of these eight observances a way for getting disciplined so as to serve God sincerely. These could be considered as virtues having ethical significance.

Devotion to Viṣṇu is said to be ninefold with the names *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, *pādasevana*, *arcana*, *vandana*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, and *ātmanivedana*. *Śravaṇa* consists in listening to the narrations of the greatness of God.[238] Singing

234. Bhāg. P. 12.3: 46.
235. *Viṣṇudharma* 109: 57; 99: 13.
236. ibid., 6: 11; V.P. 3.6: 28 to 32.
237. *Lingapurāṇa*, 28: 132.
238. Bhāg. P. 6.16: 44; 3.9: 5.

the glory of God is the second kind[239] which is praised as the easy means to get *mokṣa* in the Kali age.[240] The third kind corresponds to the stage of meditation which is enjoined in the *Upaniṣads*.[241] This is to be done in accordance with the principles of *yoga* which are hard to practise.[242] It is therefore enough if a devotee could simply recollect that God is in his heart[243] and hence the word '*smaraṇa*' which means recollection is used here instead of the word '*dhyāna*'. Rendering service at the feet of God is the fourth kind.[244] Those devotees who acquire the dust from the feet of Viṣṇu do not aspire for residence in heaven, or sovereignty, or yogic power or even *mokṣa*.[245] By continuously worshipping Viṣṇu, the person, who does service gets his devotion to the the feet of Lord strengthened, gets detachment from other things and correct knowledge about God and finally gets mental quietitude.[246] His evil deeds get controlled and do not bear the undesirable results.[247] Adoration or worship in the real sense of the word is *arcana* This is to be undertaken in the form of conducting the act of worship which consists of many items such as offering *tulasi*, flowers and others at the feet of the Lord. This is done to the accompaniment of Vedic *mantras* or select *ślokas* which are appropriate to the occasion. This is generally done to the idol of God.[248] There is a certain procedure to be adopted for this purpose.[249] The Prākṛt verses of praise could also be sung on the occassion.[250] The method of doing this may be based on the Vedic pattern and also on

239. ibid., 11.5: 36; 1.5; 22.
240. ibid., 12.3; 52.
241. Br. Up. 2.4: 5.
242. *Yogasūtra* 2. 29.
243. Bhāg. P. 12.3: 48; cf. V.P. 1.17: 37.
244. ibid., 6.3: 33; 10.14: 29.
245. ibid., 10.16: 37.
246. ibid., 11.2: 33, 43.
247. ibid., 11.5: 42.
248. ibid., 11.27: 15; 11.27: 24 (Here the word '*arcā*' is used).
249. ibid., 11.27: 19 to 49 (The word '*arcā*' is used in 48); 11.3: 48 to 54.
250. ibid., 11.27: 45.

the Tāntric one.[251] Prostration is the next kind which consists in the eight limbs touching the ground.[252] This indicates the devotees' attempt to reveal their realization of God's supremacy over them. Servitude[253] *(dāsya)* is the attitude which a devotee entertains towards God. Friendship *(sakhya)* is cultivated by the devotee for God. The devotee has implicit confidence in God and moves with Him freely actuated by deep affection.[254] Sugrīva. Draupadī[255] and others moved with God as friends. The eternal Brahman became the friend of the cowherds of Nandagopa.[256] Offering one's self to God is *ātma-nivedana*.[257] He is pleased even with the little offering that is made to Him with devotion.[258]

There are countless names for Viṣṇu, among which Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Bhagavān, Govinda, Dāmodara and Keśava could be said to be prominent. The name 'Nārāyaṇa', when uttered, relieves the person who utters it of disease, danger and miseries which oppress him.[259] The word '*vāsudeva*' means that He dwells in all the things which live in Him.[260] The name 'Bhagavān' refers to Him as the cause of all causes. He is the only cause and the first preceptor for all people. This name has the primary import only in Him.[261] This refers also to Para Brahman.[262] The name 'Govinda' was conferred on Kṛṣṇa by Indra out of respect of the Lord's successfully safeguarding the cows and others from rain.[263]

251. ibid., 11.27: 49.
252. ibid., 11.27: 45.
253. ibid., 9.5: 16.
254. ibid., 11.27: 4.
255. MBh. Vana. 12: 230.
256. Bhāg. P. 10.14: 22.
257. ibid., 10.52: 39.
258. ibid., 10.81: 3.
259. Nār. P. 1: 38.
260. V.P. 5.5: 80, 82.
261. ibid., 6.5: 77, 79; 1.9:49, 50.
262. ibid., 6.5: 76.
263. ibid., 5.12: 12; Bhāg. P. 10.27: 23; *Harivaṃśa* 2.19.

The name 'Dāmodara' was acquired by Kṛṣṇa when He was tied to a mortar by Yaśodā with a small rope. Kṛṣṇa reduced His waist so as to be tied by that rope.[264] According to the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa had sense-control *(dama)* and hence the name.[265] Nārada gave the name Keśava to Kṛṣṇa who killed the demon Keśin.[266] *Harivaṃśa* gives a different interpretation. From Viṣṇu were produced Brahmā (*ka*) and Śiva (*īśa*) and so He came to be known as Keśava.[267] It is said that in the Kaliyuga, it would be enough, if the name Keśava is uttered.[268] There is another name which is quite well-known, namely, Hari. Whether the name is uttered owing to convention, or jest or without knowing its significance, the persons who utter it are cleansed of their sins[269] and would be prevented from sufferings.[270] Agastya narrates the story of Ajāmiḷa, who by uttering the name 'Nārāyaṇa' addressing his son who bore that name, and without knowing that it is God's name, got *mokṣa*.[271]

Among the modes of worshipping God, there is the mental one as distinct from the external kind. The former is of a superior kind.[272] The Lord is within every being. The enlightened selves could worship Him.[273] Those who resort to the latter kind shall realise that they have to scrupulously abide by the eight kind of flowers (already referred to) in order that they should shed their dislike and hatred for others. Otherwise, the worship which they offer to the idols is meaningless and does not serve any purpose.[274] The ultimate goal

264. ibid., 5.6: 20; Bhāg. P. 10.9: 11 to 21; *Harivaṃśa* 2.7: 36.
265. MBh. Drona, 70: 8.
266. V.P. 5.16: 23. *Harivaṃśa* 2.24: 65. cf. Bhāg. P. 10.37 where this incident is narrated, but the name Keśava is not mentioned there as the name of Kṛṣṇa.
267. *Harivaṃśa* 3.88: 48.
268. Bhāg. P. 11.3: 51.
269. ibid., 6.3: 31.
270. ibid., 12.13: 23; cf. *Harivaṃśa* 3.88: 47.
271. ibid., 6.3: 24.
272. ibid., 3.29: 22.
273. ibid., 11.27: 48; 3.29: 21.
274. ibid., 3.29: 22 to 24.

shall be to realize that God is in the hearts of the worshipper and also other beings.[275]

The ideal of a devotee shall be to think of God constantly and to request Him for allowing Him to continue to be a sincere devotee of Him in the future births and to have no attraction for material prosperity.[276] He must seek to do service at the feet of God.[277] Sage Mārkaṇḍeya who had a longer lease of life than others, saw, during deluge, the Lord reclining as a child on a banyan leaf which was floating in the waters of the sea. He came to be called Brahmarṣi through his devotion to Viṣṇu. He requested Śiva who appeared before him, to enable him to have never-failing devotion to Viṣṇu and His devotees.[278] The devotee must also prefer to be inside a cage engulfed in fire to living amidst people who are not devoted to the Lord.[279] Otherwise, it will be a terrible loss for him to remain without thinking of Him.[280] Neither learning, nor penance, control of breath or pilgrimage would purify him as his realization that God is enshrined within him.[281]

The act of devotion is called *kriyāyoga*.[282] The devotee shall have an image of the Lord made out of gold or silver or any metal. He shall adore it, bow to it and make offerings to it. He shall meditate upon it as Brahman.[283] The *Viṣṇudharma* where this is stated is called a *śāstra*[284] and unlike the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* this recommends *yoga* as the means of propitiating God. If mind could not be con-

275. ibid., 3.29: 25.
276. V.P. 1.20: 18, 19.
277. Bhāg. P. 10.33: 35.
278. ibid., 12.8: 4; 12.10: 28 to 37.
279. cf. *Bhartṛhari Vairāgya Śataka*, 87.
280. Gar. P. 1.322: 22.
281. Bhāg. P. 12.3: 48; V.P. 1.18: 4.
282. ibid.; 3.29: 14 to 20.
283. *Viṣṇudharma* 13: 16.
284. *Studies in the Upapurāṇas* Vol. 1, p. 114.

trolled, then whatever they do, could be surrendered at the feet of God.[285]

One shall get on in the world according to the rules of the *Dharmasāstras* which are binding on all people. A devotee will have to be more careful in observing these rules. The Lord Himself declared that the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis* are His orders. Whoever violates them shall be deemed to bear malice towards Him. Even if he who is devoted to Him violates them could not be considered to be a Vaiṣṇavite.[286] One noteworthy feature in the teachings of these *Purāṇas* is that a devotee is expected to treat another devotee as his superior and show respect to him.[287] It is only when he is treated as a master and kept delighted that the Lord is happy.[288] The devotee shall take the water with which the feet of the Lord and His devotees are washed.[289] One shall surrender himself to him who has in his turn surrendered himself to another who did thus to another who again did thus to him who had surrendered himself to God. Then he would be freed from all sins.[290] A devotee of Viṣṇu would not go to hell whatever be the nature of the family in which he is born.[291] Conversely, those who insult Viṣṇu and His devotees would surely go to hell.[292] Those who treat Him on a par with other gods are condemned as *pāsaṇḍa*.[293] When it is realized that Nārāyaṇa is the inner self of all and that everything is of the nature of Nārāyaṇa, every being will have to be treated with respect. There will then be no room for treating some persons as friends and others as foes.[294]

---

285. Bhāg. P, 11.11: 22 to 24.
286. *Viṣṇudharma* 6: 31; 52: 20.
287. *Vṛddha Hārītasmṛti* 8:28; M.Bh. *Aśvamedhika* 106: 23.
288 Pādm. P. 81: 52
289. *Bṛhannāradīya purāṇa*, 35: 15, 16; Vridd. Hār. Smṛti 8:28; *Bṛhadbrahma saṃhitā* 3.7: 146; Bhāg. P. 11.29: 41 Pau.S 31: 119, 120.
290 cf. TVM. 3.7: 10; *Bṛhannāradīya* 34:61.
291. Sātt.S 2.9; MBh. *Āśvamedhika* 96: 46.
292. V.P. 3.7: 33; MBh. *Śānti* 336 36.
293. cf. Śrīdhara on V.P. 3.18.
294. V.P. 1.19: 37, 38.

786—10

The devotees of Viṣṇu are born only in some places but they are found, during the Kali age, mostly in the southern regions called Drāviḍa deśa where the rivers Tāmraparṇī, Vaigai, Kāviri, Pālāṛu and Periyāṛu flow.[295] Apart from the correctness of the statement, as far as the numerically larger number of Viṣṇu temples are concerned which are in these regions attracting large number of devotees, this passage has some weight; for it is in these regions that the Āḻvārs were born and propagated the path of devotion.

The path of self-surrender does not get exclusive treatment in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. The devotee is asked by the Lord to seek Him for shelter, so that he could be free from all fears of worldly life.[296] On the other hand, the two main *Purāṇas* are devoted to the treatment of the path of devotion to the utter exclusion of *jñāna* and *karma*.[297] The path of devotion,[298] the greatness of the devotees[299] and other aspects have received a detailed treatment in these *Purāṇas*.

The supreme region of Viṣṇu is known as Paramapada. It is full of pure intelligence, is eternal, unchanging and has neither beginning nor end. It is neither gross nor subtle and thus lies beyond description. The *yogins* visualize it in the *Praṇava*.[300] Those who reach it do not return to the world. The two *Purāṇas* speak of this region where the soul lives in bliss with the Lord and all his celestial host.[301] But they do not seem to regard this as the final state of release, for it is said that souls which have become free from sin dwell here till the end of a *kalpa*[302] and then proceed through the other states till finally they become "immersed in that great Soul."[303]

---

295. Bhāg. P. 11;5: 38, 39.
296. ibid., 11.12: 15.
297. ibid., 11.20: 31 to 36.
298. ibid., 11.14: 20, 22, 25.
299. ibid., 11.14: 13 to 15; cf. ibid., 11.14: 16, 18, 26.
300. V.P. 1.9: 50 to 56.
301. ibid., 2.8:101, 102; Bhāg. P. 2.2:31
302. ibid., 2.8: 97.
303. Bhāg. P. 2.2:31

Accordingly the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* teaches that, as the state of the gods is a thousand times superior to that of pious men, so the state of the liberated souls is a thousand times superior to that of gods in heaven.[304] Dwelling as the gods in heaven is only a stage[305] in obtaining final emancipation, which he who remembers Hari obtains at once without the necessity of going through the intermediate stages. Similarly it is stated in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that the devotee reaches directly the state of Viṣṇu, which Siva and other deities finally attain.[306] But it is not stated what exactly this highest state of release is except that it is merging into the Deity. But it is described at times to involve an extinction of sense as in sleep, the cessation of the idea of ego, and with it the disappearance of all distinction between subject and object, seer and seen, in short, the rejection of the idea of duality, and of all differences between the individual and Universal Soul. At other times some kind of distinction between the soul and the Diety is assumed as in the case of Prahlāda attaining unity with the Supreme Being. "He forgot entirely his own individuality and was conscious of nothing And he thought that he himself was the endless inexhaustible Supreme Soul. And on account of this efficient notion of identity the imperishable Viṣṇu...... appeared in his mind which was wholly purified from sin."[307] According to this account, it would appear that the soul, in its beatific experience of union with the Deity, forgets itself or loses consciousness of itself, not that it ceases to exist. This impression gained on the human side from the experience of the soul which had attained unity with the Divine, is confirmed also on the divine side by the words of the Deity Himself. "I have no liking either for Myself or for My immortal consort Lakṣmī without the association of My saintly devotees whose sole refuge I am. How can I leave them who have renounced their wives, home, children, relations, wealth and this world and the next, and completely surrendered themselves to Me? They do not know anything

304. V.P. 2.6: 32, 33.

305. ibid., 2.8.

306. Bhāg. P. 4.24:68

307. V.P. 1.20: 3.

other than Me nor do I know anything else but them.[308] It is seen from the above that in release the soul becomes intimately but not completely one with God.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the conception of God as revealed in these works is as follows: the Lord dwells internally in all beings and all things dwell in Him. The Lord Vāsudeva is the creator and preserver of the world. Though identical with all beings He is beyond and separate from material nature, from its products, from properties and from imperfections. He is beyond investing substance. He is Universal Soul; all the interstices of the universe are filled up by Him. He is one with all good qualities, and all created things are endowed with a small portion of His individuality. Assuming various shapes He bestows benefits on the whole world, which is his work of creation. Glory, might, dominion, wisdom, energy, power and other attributes are collected in Him. He is the Supreme of the supreme, in whom no imperfections abide; He is the Lord over finite and infinite. God in individuals and universals, visible and invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty.

308. Bhāg. p. 9.4: 63 to 68.

THE SUPREME BEING IN THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

The *Bhagavad-gitā* or the song of the celestial is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and variable. In fact, it is regarded by almost all sections of the Hindus as one of the most sacred religious works and a large number of commentaries has been written on it by the adherents of different schools of thought, each of which explained the poem in its own favour. For example, the systems of *Vedānta* consider this poem as one of the triple foundations, the other two being the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahma-sūtras* and the three being known as the triple canon or *Prasthāna-traya*. It is no exaggeration to say that the *Bhagavad gitā* gives utterance to, and fulfils the aspirations of, the pilgrims of all sects who seek to tread the inner way to the city of God.

The aim of the *Gitā* is not so much to teach a theory as to enforce practice, *dharma*. In fact, the work opens with a practical problem. In the beginning Arjuna is found despondent and declining to fight; his mind is clouded, his conventions unsettled, and his whole consciousness confused; he is being guided by social conventions and customary morality and not by his individual perception of truth. So he refuses to fight and raises difficulties. He puts up a plausible plea for abstention from activity. To convert him is the purpose of the *Gitā*. Arjuna gets enlightened and declares that his perplexities are ended and he would carry out the command to fight.[1] Right through the work Kṛṣṇa emphasizes the need for action.[2] He recommends the full active life of men in

1. Bh. G. 18: 74.
2. ibid., 2:18, 37; 3:19; 4:15; 8:7; 11:33; 16:24; 18:6, 72.

the world with the inner life anchored in the Eternal Spirit.

In the discourse, the Lord declares emphatically His identity with Brahman.[3] Arjuna too does the same.[4] This is done by bringing out the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* in a nutshell.[5] The *Gītā* has a better appeal to humanity by the happy blending of knowledge, work and religious attitude which form the central teaching of the *Upaniṣads*. In fact, the *Upaniṣads* are taken to represent the cows, Kṛṣṇa is the milkman and the *Gītā* represents the nectar-like milk got through Kṛṣṇa. It is this attitude to the *Gītā* that made it acquire a significant place both in the philosophical and religious schools of India.

In speaking of the Supreme Deity the *Gītā* uses terms such as Brahman,[6] the Imperishable,[7] and others which are used in the *Upaniṣads*. But its own distinctive name for God i. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is spoken of as Viṣṇu.[8] The mace and discus which are ornaments of Viṣṇu are mentioned among the ornaments by the Lord in the glorious form in which He appeared to Arjuna.[9] The *Gītā's* unique contribution lies in the thought that the Supreme Being of the *Upaniṣads*, the all-pervading unknowable One whom the philosophers proclaimed has assumed the form of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna's charioteer.[10] That Ultimate Being indeed appears in human form, speaks through human lips and is concerned about human affairs.

Viṣṇu occupies a significant place in the *Ṛg. Veda* as a deity rendering help to the suffering humanity by taking the three strides. Kṛṣṇa's identity with Viṣṇu is established directly and through identification with the solar deities,

3. ibid., 5:29.
4. ibid., 11:36 to 46.
5. ibid., 8:8 to 11.
6. ibid., 10:2.
7. ibid., 9:13; 11.18, 37.
8. ibid., 10:21; 11:24, 30; also as Hari ibid., 11:9; 18:77.
9. ibid., 11:10, 46.
10. It is this condescending nature of the Lord that has appealed to the Āḻvārs who, especially Nammāḻvār, revel in it. vide TVM 1.3: 1.9: 2.3 etc.

Ādityas.[11] The importance of Viṣṇu as *Puruṣa* had paved the way for the declaration of the Lord as *Puruṣottama*.[12] That Kṛṣṇa is identical with Nārāyaṇa is suggested by His being the resting place of all beings,[13] but there is no specific mention of this in the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa has all the attributes ascribed to the Supreme Being. He is spoken of as Supreme Brahman (*parabrahman*),[14] Supreme Persons (*puruṣottama*).[15] Great Lord (*maheśvara*),[16] the "Imperishable, the Being, the Not-being, That Supreme",[17] Exalted Being (*maheśvara*)[18] and Supreme Self.[19] As Supreme Being, He is incomprehensible,[20] infinite of form having no end, middle or beginning,[21] boundless,[22] from everlasting,[23] primal,[24] unborn,[25] changeless,[26] and immutable.[27] He is all-marvellous,[28] terrible,[29] facing every way,[30] possessed of boundless power and infinite might,[31] resplendent and filled with glory.[32] He is connected with the past, present and future.[33] He is subtler than the subtle.[34] The gods do not know Him nor do the great sages for all of whom He is the source.[35] What is revealed as representing God's forms only a fraction of His glory signifying that this cosmos is but a partial revelation of His and showing that His full glory is beyond the human ken.[36] Such are His transcendent qualities which compel fear, awe and reverence.[37] The Lord is immanent. He enters into every living body, controls it and sustains it also.[38] He enters into the three worlds and

11. ibid., 10:21.
12. ibid., 10:15; 11:3; 15:17, 18.
13. ibid., 9:4, 5.
14. ibid., 10:12.
15. ibid., 10:15; 11:3.
16. ibid., 9:11 also as Parameśvara ibid., 11:3.
17. ibid., 11:37.
18. ibid., 11:12, 20, 37, 50.
19. ibid., 13:22.
20. ibid., 11:17, 42.
21. ibid., 10:20; 11:16.
22. ibid., 13:31.
23. ibid., 11:18
24. ibid., 11:31.
25. ibid., 10:3.
26. ibid., 11:18.
27. ibid., 9:13.
28. ibid., 11:11.
29. ibid., 11:20.
30. ibid., 11:11.
31. ibid., 11:40.
32. ibid., 11:17, 30.
33. ibid., 7:26.
34. ibid., 8:9.
35. ibid., 10:2.
36. ibid., 10:42
37. ibid., 11:20 to 31; ibid., 7:26.
38. ibid., 13:22

sustains them Himself without undergoing any change[39] signifying that He penetrates into the inert matter as well[40] and fully pervades it.[41]

Besides these transcendent qualities, the Lord has numerous perfections which render Him the object of man's highest aspiration and love. He is the Light of lights,[42] the discernment of the discerning, the brilliance of the brilliant,[43] the source of memory and knowledge,[44] the dispeller of doubt,[45] the maker of the *Vedānta*,[46] omniscient and unrivalled in knowledge,[47] the source of the seven Great Seers and the four Ancients (Manus),[48] identifiable only with the prime and most significant of every species of existence.[49] Not among the least of the God's attributes is His ethical perfection. At His sight great seers and perfected ones in hosts cry 'hail' and adore Him with hymns of abounding praise[50] and the demons flee in terror.[51] He is without flaw[52] and is strictly impartial.[53] He always sets the standard for men to follow.[54] He has instituted the eternal laws of duty (*sāśvatadharma*)[55] and is the undying guardian of the eternal law.[56] So important it seems to Him that the laws of duty must not be transgressed that, as in the present case, He even descends in order to establish righteousness. "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata, I incarnate Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age."[57] That God considers even His infinitude of little account when righteousness needs to be established is a remarkable contribution which the *Gītā* makes to the conception of the Divine. Besides righteousness, there is another attribute, love, which the *Gītā* ascribes to God. God is the friend of every being.[58]

39. ibid., 13:31 to 34.
40. ibid , 15:17.
41. ibid., 8:22.
42 ibid., 13:17.
43. ibid., 7:10.
44. ibid., 15:15.
45. ibid , 15:15.
46. ibid., 15:15.
47. ibid., 7:26.
48. ibid., 10:6.
49. ibid., 10:20 to 38.
50. ibid., 11:21.
51. ibid., 11:36.
52. ibid., 5:19.
53. ibid., 9:29.
54. ibid., 3:23.
55. ibid., 14:27.
56. ibid., 11:18.
57. ibid., 4.:7, 8.
58. ibid., 5:29.

As Kṛṣṇa, God appears as Arjuna's comrade.[59] He even stoops to be Arjuna's charioteer. So intimate and human is the Lord Kṛṣṇa's friendship that Arjuna is afraid that in negligence or love, he has not shown the reverence that is due to Him,[60] and asks that He should bear with him "as a father to his son, as a friend to his friend and as lover to his beloved."[61] Kṛṣṇa in His turn declares that Arjuna is exceedingly beloved of Him,[62] and because of His love, He reveals Himself to Arjuna in a form in which no eyes had ever seen Him.[63] And when Arjuna is filled with terror and awe at His glorious form, He assumes a shape more pleasant to Arjuna and consoles the latter.[64] The Unmanifest and the Incomprehensible reveals indeed a heart of love and compassion, and Arjuna bursts forth in adoration at this wonderful revelation.[65]

According to the *Gītā*, the world is real and forms a part of the Supreme, being created, supported, and dissolved by Him. He is the origin of the universe and its dissolution as well.[66] Every thing in the world is strung on Him as rows of gems on a string [67] All beings enter into God at the end of the cycle and become one with Him. He releases them at the beginning of the next cycle.[68] Under His guidance, nature *(prakṛti)* gives birth to all objects, moveable and immoveable and the world revolves.[69] There is nothing moving or unmoving that can exist without Him.[70] He is everything, the taste in the waters, the light in the moon and the sun; the pure fragrance in earth and brightness in fire; and the life in all existences.[71] *Prakṛti* is a principle with which the material world is always connected. It is not an independent principle; it is His own. It works under His control[72]. Brahman then

59. ibid , 11:41.
60. ibid., 11:41, 42.
61. ibid., 11:44.
62. ibid., 18:64.
63. ibid., 11:47.
64. ibid., 11:49, 50.
65. ibid., 11:43 to 45.
66. ibid., 7:6; cf. ibid. 10:8.
67. ibid., 7:7.
68. ibid., 11:7.
69. ibid., 11:10.
70. ibid., 10:39.
71. ibid., 7:8, 9.
72. ibid., 9:10.

in relation to the world is found to display a double nature. He is the material cause of the world on the one hand, and its instrumental cause on the other.[73] He, however, does not partake of the nature of the three *guṇas - sattva, rajas* and *tamas* - the ultimate constituents of *Prakṛti*. "Know thou that (those three states) are all from Me alone. I am not in them; they are in Me."[74] *Prakṛti* with its *guṇas* forms an eternal part of God who is the substratum of all beings. He abides in all the beings and controls them.[75] He remains seated in the hearts of all living beings. This shows that the Lord is the *śarīrin* for the soul and for its body.[76]

The finite selves are sent into wordly existence *(saṃsāra)*, sustained and finally withdrawn by the Lord at the end of each world-cycle.[77] The attitude of the Lord to the individual souls is one of love. He is jealous of any other besides Himself occupying their affection, and consequently wishes all to worship Him whole-heartedly without allegiance to any other God.[78] Whatever work is done is to be done as unto Him, without attachment to anything besides Himself.[79] One's thought, one's remembrance, one's meditation are to be centred on Him, and no other.[80] He is the witness of man's activities which He approves. He shall be known through meditation as present in the hearts of living beings. This realization could be had also through knowledge and work. Those who could not have it themselves shall learn this from those who had known it.[81] The Lord does not command the self to adopt any of these causes in particular. He makes the self know what these causes are and gives it the full freedom to choose itself the cause it likes to pursue.[82] Thus it is seen that every method of directing oneself to God is advocated by the *Gītā*.

73. ibid., 9:18, 19; 10.8; 14:4.
74. ibid., 7:12.
75. ibid., 9:4, 5; 15:13, 17.
76. ibid., 10:20.
77. ibid., 9:5 to 11.
78. ibid., 9:23, 24.
79. ibid., 18:2 to 6; 9:27; 3:17 to 19.
80. ibid., 3:39 to 43; ibid., 6:7, 14 to 27; 9:34.
81. ibid., 13:22, 24, 25.
82. ibid. 18:63.

The Lord takes births in the world for the well-being of humanity,[83] but His births and acts are divine[84] and are not bound by the features of mortality. Though unchanging, He descends down to this world through His mysterious power.[85] He presents Himself to mankind as the visible object of devotion. This aspect receives treatment in the *Mahābhārata*, but it is only here that the Lord offers His assurances to stand by the side of the self showering His graces for which He demands faith from the self.[86]

The *jīva* is asked to do his duty which is enjoined for his status by the scriptures which could be interpreted into *karma yoga* i.e., applying himself to the work. This could be done more easily by setting one's mind on God through devotion. Those who are devoted to God, always worship Him by singing His glory, doing their religious duties and bowing to Him.[87] The devotees are said to perform sacred rites in the form of knowledge.[88] Offering of any kind, be it a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water when made with pure heart and love, is accepted by the Lord.[89] Whatever one does, whatever one eats, whatever one offers, whatever one gives away. whatever austerities one practises shall be surrendered to Him.[90] One should be freed from bonds of works, from fruits both good and evil.[91] The wise worship Him, set their hearts on Him and talk to each other about His deeds rejoicing in these acts.[92] Doing one's duty, according to the *Gītā* is the work of God; it is a mode of worshipping Him.[93] By doing one's duty with reliance placed on God one gets the imperishable status through His grace.[94] The *Gītā* repeats that restraint and freedom from desire are essential to spiritual perfection. "Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me;

83. ibid., 4:5.
84. ibid., 4:9.
85. ibid., 4:6.
86. ibid., 9:22, 31.
87. ibid., 9:14.
88. ibid., 9:15.
89. ibid., 9:26.
90. ibid., 9:27.
91. ibid., 9:28.
92. ibid., 10:9.
93. ibid., 12:10.
94. ibid., 18:56.

prostrate thyself to Me".[95] Thus various acts of worship which come under *karma* have to be performed with single-minded devotion.

The *karma* doctrine that is based on the ritualistic principles and is emphasized in the *Mīmāṃsā* system has received a splendid and attractive treatment in the *Gītā*. Firstly, whatever is enjoined in the traditional texts, shall be carried out by the self, not merely as an obligatory rite but as one's duty *(svadharma)*.[96] One's duty shall never be given up and shall be done at any cost, even risking loss.[97] Secondly, the self shall do this by giving up the feeling that it is the doer and by surrendering both the deed and its results to the Lord.[98] This implies that even if there are any lapses in the discharge of such acts, the self will not in the least be affected by them, the act being God's work. The punishment in the form of sufferings which the self will have to bear according to the *Dharmaśāstras* is thus got rid of.[99] Lastly, the deeds are done with the help of the organs of action *(karmendriya)*. While doing them, the sense-organs *(jñānendriya)* are kept by mind under control.[100] This in a way prevents the rise of a desire for the self in repeating those acts when alone there will be room for attachment to the world.[101] Thus there is a happy reconciliation in the *Bhagavad-gītā* of the *Mīmāṃsā* concept of *karma* with the *karma-yoga*. The Lord declares that this concept was taught by Him in ancient times to the Sun from whom it passed to Manu and from him to Ikṣvāku. It became forgotten and so there had risen the necessity for Kṛṣṇa to restate it.[102] This aspect of *Karma* is called *Niṣkāma-karma*. It is very easy to appreciate this concept but to put it into practice assiduously, it is necessary to acquire correct knowledge of this and of reality.[103] The other advantage of acquiring knowledge is the ease with which the most heinous crimes would get destroyed like the faggots in the fire.[104]

95. ibid.; 18:65.
96. ibid., 3:9.
97. ibid., 3:35; 5:2.
98. ibid., 3:19; 5:10; 18:2.
99. ibid., 9:10; cf. ibid. 4:19, 20.
100. ibid., 3:4, 5, 7; 4:21 to 23.
101. ibid., 5:10.
102. ibid., 4:1 to 3.
103. ibid.; 4:35.
104. ibid., 4:37.

Herein lies the relation of *karma-yoga* with *jñāna-yoga* whose full implications are not meant for application here. It is mere deed that is recommended for practice. Knowledge of reality is required to guide the self for the correct practice of the deed.[105]

Next comes *jñāna-yoga*. It is taught with *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. The devotee should follow this path with purified mind. He should dwell in solitude and have a complete control of his senses; he should eat little, control speech, body and mind and keep engaged in meditation. Practising detachment and casting aside egotism, personal might, arrogance, passion, anger, possession and being tranquil he becomes worthy of attaining God.[106] It is declared that when this culminating knowledge is reached the soul comes to know God, what His measure is, and who He is in truth, it goes to God.[107] He is verily the object to be known[108] the description of which as contained here reminds us of its affinity to the *Upaniṣads* both in tone and expressions.[109]

The *Gītā* stresses that unswerving devotion to God is the means of reaching Him.[110] He who meditates on the Supreme Being with his thought attuned by constant practice and not wandering after anything else, reaches Him.[111] The disciplined yogin easily attains Him.[112] One who serves the Lord with unfailing devotion of love, and rises above the three strands *(guṇas)* is fit to reach Brahman [113] The *Gītā* defines the characteristics of a true devotee and the Lord says that persons with such characteristics are liked by Him.[114] The virtuous

105. ibid., 4:16.
106. ibid., 18 51: to 53; cf. ibid., 13:7 to 10.
107. ibid., 18:55.
108. ibid., 15:15
109. ibid., 13:12 to 18.
110. ibid., 8:22; 7:14
111. ibid., 8:8
112. ibid., 8:14.
113. ibid., 14: 26. cf. ibid., 14:20.
114. ibid., 12:13 to 20.

ones who worship the Lord are of four kinds. The afflicted, those in distress, who have suffered losses belong to one class. Those who are desirous of wealth wish to improve their material position form another. The third group consists of devout and upright men who wish to know the truth. They are on the right way. To the fourth belong the *jñānins* who know "that Vāsudeva is all". [115] The Lord, however, is not partial to any one.[116] The true devotee will worship God realising Him as the source of everything.[117] He is endowed with conviction that he would be able to get his wish realised only from Him.[118] Even if a man of vile conduct worships Him with undistracted devotion......quickly he becomes righteous and goes to everlasting peace.[119]

Those who take refuge in the Lord alone, it is stated, can overcome the divine *māyā* consisting of the modes.[120] Though it is stated that the soul attains the immutable and eternal status by His grace, it is not asserted, at any rate, that it has no part to play in salvation; for it is said "surrendering thought, all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme and resorting to steadfastness in understanding do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me Fixing thy Krought on Me, thou shalt by My grace, cross over all difficulties"[121]; and again "Flee unto Me, for shelter with all thy being. By My grace shalt thou obtain supreme peace and eternal abode".[122] It may appear from the above, that the loving God is not unwilling to extend His grace to the most undeserving, even apart from all qualifying conditions, if the latter goes to Him for refuge. Accordingly the Lord declares, "Abandoning all duties come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all

115. ibid., 7:16 to 19. of MBHR. *Śānti*: 341: 33.
116. ibid., 9:29.
117. ibid., 15: 15.
118. ibid., 10: 8.
119. ibid.; 9: 30, 31.
120. ibid., 7:14.
121. ibid., 18: 57, 58.
122. ibid., 18:62.

evils".[123] But fearing that this doctrine of totally unmerited grace may lead to misunderstanding and a life of sin He adds, in the very next verse, "Never is this to be spoken by thee to one who is not austere in life, or who has no devotion in Him, or who is not obedient, or who speaks ill of Me".[124] The self's righteousness demands that good deeds should be rewarded and evil deeds punished. Accordingly the soul which has given itself to such deeds takes its rebirth to reap the fruits of its deeds. The reason for such rebirth is that the soul may thus be led to perfection. "Having attained to the world of the the righteous and dwelt there for very many years, the man who has fallen away from *yoga* is again born in the house of such as are pure and prosperous. There he regains the (mental) impressions (of union with the Divine) which he had developed in his previous life and with this (as the starting point) he strives again for perfection".[125] "If, when purity *(sattva)* has increased, the body-bearing soul comes to dissolution, then he proceeds to the spotless worlds of the most wise. If, when energy (*rajas*) has increased, he goes to dissolution, he is born among men attached to work; and if dissolved when darkness (*tamas*) has increased, he is born in the wombs of the deluded."[126] The Lord seeks by His grace to wean the soul away from attachment to the finite and when He has succeeded in directing its entire mind, will and devotion to Him, He takes it to Himself, without sending it once more into rebirth, never again to be separated from Him by *saṃsāra*. "With thought controlled by constant practice and seeking no other resort, one goes to the Supreme Celestial Person".[127] "He who constantly meditates on Me, thinking of none else, by him who is a *yogin* ever disciplined easy am I of access."[128]

123; ibid,. 18: 66. This is *caramaśloka*. Nammāḷvār the super-*prapanna* of Vaiṣṇavism performs this self-surrender (vide TVM. 6.10: 10), as will be seen and explained later.

124. ibid., 18: 67.

125. ibid., 6: 41, 43.

126. ibid., 14: 14, 15.

127. ibid., 8: 4.

128. ibid., 8: 14.

There are also references in the *Gītā* to show the relation of the soul with God when the former has reached its final goal. The released soul becomes closely united with God,[129] the eternal and immutable abode.[130] which is beyond death[131] and where there is no sickness.[132] Though the soul enters into God, as it is stated, it does not get merged with Him losing its individuality completely; for it abides in Him,[133] enjoying contact with Him,[134] having attained a nature similar to that of God.[135] At a creation the soul does not come into birth, nor at a dissolution is it disturbed.[136] In this way the *Gītā* teaches that the soul in its release becomes closely united with God enjoying communion with Him and sharing in His peace, bliss and perfection.

In the Rāmānuja school of Vaiṣṇavism, the *Bhagavad-gītā* plays the role of an authority championing the cause of *jñāna, karma* and *bhakti*. Rāmānuja learnt from his preceptors the significant import of the *Gītā* as it was taught by Āḷavantār who learnt it from Maṇakkāl Nampi.[137] In his *Gītārtha-saṁgraha* Āḷavantār declares that the Lord is shown in the *Gītā* as attainable through devotion alone[138] The first section consisting of six chapters define the nature of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* as the limbs of *ātmāvalōkana* or the intuition of the *ātman* as a means to *bhakti-yoga*. The second section of six chapters establishes the nature of God. It extols devotion as the supreme means to emancipation and its course is effected through *jñāna* and *karma*. The third and the last section of six chapters sums up the whole truth, and insists on absolute self-surrender to the Lord as the only way of

129. ibid., 4: 10; 14: 19; 18: 55.

130. ibid. 8: 28; 15: 5; 18: 56, 62. of. TVM. 2.5: 11; 3.8: 11; 4.7: 11; 4.8: 11 etc.

131. ibid., 2: 15; 13: 12, 25; 14: 18, 27.

132. ibid., 2: 51. cf TVM. 1.7: 11; 3.5: 11; 9.7: 11; 10.1: 11 etc.

133. ibid., 5: 19, 20 cf. Peri. Tm. 4. 1: 10; 4.2: 10; 4.9: 10; 5.5: 10.

134. ibid.. 6: 28.

135. ibid., 14:2.

136. ibid;, 14:2. cf. TVM. 4. 10: 11.

137. G.P., p.81.

138. *Gītārtha-saṁgraha*. 1.

redemption. It brings out the nature of God as distinct from matter and self.[139] *Karma-yoga* is to be understood as standing for practices like doing penance, visiting holy places, giving charity and performing sacrifices.[140] The path of knowledge consists in those who have controlled their minds remaining in the stage of flawless self [141]. The path of devotion consists in the self taking to mediation in order to exclusively please the Supreme Being.[142] These three courses could mutually become helpful for each other's development. The doing of the obligatory and occasioned *(naimittika)* rites shall be taken as the act of pleasing the Supreme Being.[143] One who yearns to render service to God steadfastly and everlastingly shall get to Him.[144]

A dispassionate insight into the import of the ***Bhagvad-gītā*** reveals that besides laying emphasis on the need to do one's duty, the *Gītā* asks the aspirant to be devoted to God in order to do his work without any impediment. Faith and Grace are the foundations of *bhakti-yoga* which is ably presented on the basis of sound reasoning. Devotion, according to the *Gītā,* is'one essential element in a religious attitude, where the knowledge and work, play their due part'.[145] This is essential even for those who adopt the paths of *karma* and *ñāna*.[146] Dedicating ev.ry thing to God is strongly recommended. Apart from the assurance given by the Lord to seek His shelter, the *Gītā* does not seem to directly recommend the path of self-surrender.

---

139. ibid., 2, 3, 4.
140. ibid., 23.
141. ibid., 23.
142. ibid., 24.
143. ibid., 25.
144. ibid., 26.
145. *The Bhagavad-gītā – An English Translation and Commentary :* Introduction, p.67.
146. Bh. G. 9: 34.

GODHEAD IN THE ĀGAMAS AND IN RITUAL WORSHIP

A perusal of the contents of the *Vedas*, *Itihsās* and *Purāṇas* would show that penances and sacrifices were the means of getting freedom from worldly bondage. The path of devotion as the means of salvation is emphasised in the *Purāṇas* and is given greater significance than in the other source books. The *Sāttvata* mode of worshipping God is dealt with for the first time in the *Mahābhārata*, *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and other works. References to the worship of the concrete form of God are scanty in these works. The gradually diminishing powers of mental concentration of men with the passage of time must have been responsible for the creation of the cult of *arcā* form. At first, the *Tāntrika* mode which is based on the mystic diagram and magic formulas should have been adopted but this too having been felt as unsuited for man in controlling himself had been replaced by the concrete image of God. God's possession of a body analogous to that of human beings, this body being admitted to be made up of matter which is not of the material kind and God's descent for rescuing the suffering humanity are all the resultant features of theism which came to characterize the Āgamic literature. This is not to declare that the *Āgamas* prohibit the earlier mode of worship which is called mental or internal sacrifice (*mānasa yāga* or *āntara yāga*).[1] The *Āgamas* lay stress on the external mode of worship (*bāhya yāga*).[2]

The *Āgamas* declare that *mokṣa* shall be the aim to be reached, after death, by those who are in bondage. A correct knowledge will have to be acquired for this and this is dealt

1. L.T. Ch. 36; *Pārameś*. S. Ch. 5; *Jay*. S. 12.
2. ibid., Ch. 37 to 39; *Pārameś*. S. Ch. 6; Jay. 13.

with in the section called *jñāna-pāda* (knowledge part) of the *Āgamas*. Concentration, though not very difficult as in the other courses of *mokṣa*, must be practised. This is dealt with in the *yoga-pāda* (devotion part). Construction of temples for locating the idols and the rules governing such constructions are found treated in the *kriyā-pāda* (service part). The *caryā-pāda* (conduct part) is devoted to the observance of the rituals connected with worship. The *Pādma*, *Bṛhadbrahma* and *Viṣṇutattva* have all the four pādas while others have some of them.

The *Āgamas* prescribe the methods of worshipping the deity. There are many deities and so the *Āgamas* too have become grouped into heads such as *Śaiva*, *Śākta* and *Vaiṣṇava* according as the deities to be held as supreme are Śiva, Śakti and Viṣṇu respectively. Even among the Vaiṣṇvite *Āgamas*, there are two prominent divisions, namely *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa*. The name *Pāñcarātra* is accounted for as being due to the fact that it had been explained by the original expounder in five successive *rātris* or nights.[3] This is so stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as having been narrated in five nights of a *Satra*.[4] The word '*rātri*' may be taken to stand for ignorance and the system of *Pāñcarātra* can be taken to destroy the five-fold ignorance. The name is also said to be due to the five qualities of *mahābhūta*, namely, the five gross elements (*bhūtas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), egoistry or individuation (*ahaṅkāra*), and thought (*buddhi*) and the formless original matter (*avyakta*). These five constitute the *rātris* or gifts of *Puruṣa*[5]. Hence the *Tantra* or the *Śāstra* which treats of these gifts gets called *Pāñcarātra*.[6] Dr. Schrader throws out a suggestion that the name *Pāñcarātra* points to five principal subjects treated in the system, namely, (i) *tattva* (ontology-cosmology), (ii) *mukti-prada* (liberation), (iii) *bhakti-prada* (devotion), (iv) *Yaugika* (*yoga*),

3. Pār. S. 31: 19.
4. Sat. Br. 6: 1. This appears in one of the early *Saṁhitās* namely, Ahir. S. ch. 12.
5. Pār. S. 1: 30 to 40.
6. ibid., 1: 33.

and (v) *vaiśeṣika* (the objects of the sense). In this case, *rātra*, which meant originally "night", must be taken to mean both a cardinal doctrine of a system as well as the chapter or work dealing with that doctrine, that is: it became synonymous with *tantra* or *saṁhitā* so that *Pāñcarātra* would be a designation of the ancient Vaiṣṇavite system.[7] There is also another derivation according to which the name has been derived from the five-fold duties of routine life, namely, (i) *abhigamana* (going to the temple of God in the morning with the mind, the speech and the body centred on Him), (ii) *upādāna* (collecting the materials for worship), (iii) *ijyā* (worship) (iv) *svādhyāya* (study of the sacred texts and muttering of the usual *mantras*) and (v) *yoga* (meditation). These are to be undertaken in the course of the day which is to be divided into five parts for this purpose. The word '*rātra*' must be taken to stand for both day and night. According to another interpretation, the principles of this system were taught to Sanatkumāra by Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Nāga and Ṛṣi and what were taught by them came to be called *Brahma-rātra*, *Śiva-rātra*, *Indra-rātra*, *Nāga-rātra*, and *Ṛṣi-rātra* respectively.[8]

It cannot be asserted very definitely from the materials so far available as to when this school of thought originated, but to a certain extent it may be said to have had a very ancient history. The *Pāñcarātra* is traditionally believed to have been first taught by *Nārāyaṇa* – the supreme deity – to Nara, who in his turn, handed it over to Nārada, Sanaka, Śāṇḍilya, Prahlāda, Sugrīva and other Ṛṣis. Since its source is of a divine origin it is called *Bhagavacchāstra*. It has been stated in the *Mahābhārata* that Viṣṇu who is also the creator of the *Vedas* took the essence from the *Vedas* and *Vedāntas* and gave it in a condensed form for His devotees calling it as *Pāñcarātra*. Some of the traditional works of the *Pāñcarātra* school further assert that the literature originated with the *Vedas* and

7. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, p. 24.
8. Bhār. S. 2: 12, 13.

that its source is the *Ekāyanaśākhā*[9] affiliated to the *Kāṇvaśākhā* of the *Śuklayajurveda.* It is quite probable that the *Pāñcarātra Śṛuti* and *Pāñcarātra Upaniṣad* mentioned by Utpala in his *sandapradīpikā*[10] refer to the literature of the *Ekāyanaśākhā*. Further, passages quoted by the same author under the general name *Pāñcarātra* may probably refer to such ancient works as of the *Ekāyana-śākhā* because of their Vedic style and the nature of their contents. Utpala also quotes from a number of *Saṁhitās* of the *Pāñcarātra* school. Utpala's quotations are found to be divided in three distin t groups namely, *Pāñcarātra Śruti, Pāñcarātra Upaniṣad,* and *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā.* It is thus quite conceivable that even as late as the tenth century when Utpala flourished, the *Śruti* literature of the *Pāñcarātras* existed, and probably, it is this branch of literature that the *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitās* refer to as the *Ekāyana Veda* or the *Ekāyana-śākhā.* The validity of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* is thus taken for granted by Utpala. Yāmuna vindicates the validity of these texts[11] as also Jayantabhatta of Kashmir[12] who lived about 850 A.D. There is a specific mention of this in the *Śri Raṅgarājastavam*[13] The whole subject is discussed in detail in the *Pāñcarātraraksa* by Vedanta Deśika.

The *Pāñcarātra* texts are of three kinds, viz., (a) *Divya* (divine) those spoken of by the Lord Himself the examples of which are *Sāttvata, Pauṣkara* and *Joyākhya Saṁhitās*; (b) *Munibhāṣita* (uttered by Brahmā and the sages) for which *Īśvara, Pārameśvara, Bhāradvāja* and other *Saṁhitās* may be as examples; (c) *Mānuṣya* (composed by men) and for this

9. The word '*ekāyana*' occurs in the Ch. Up. as the name of a branch of study, Vide: 7.1: 2; 7.1: 4; 7,2: 1; 7.5: 2; 7.7: 1. It means one path (eka–one, *ayana*-path) for salvation (Is. S. 1: 19).

10. Page 2.

11. The *Āgamaprāmāṇya (p 88)* which is his independent work on this subject refers to *Kāsmira Āgamaprāmāṇya without mentioning its author as a work on this subject.*

12. *Nyāyamañjari I, p. 242.*

13. *Śri Raṅgarājastava* 2: 14.

kind *Āgamaprāmāṇya* of Yāmunacārya may be given as an example. The texts belonging to this group are called by the names *Divyaśāstra*, *Bhagavacchāstra* and *Siddhānta*. There are 225 texts which belong to the *Pāñcarātra system*.[14] The names of these end generally as *Saṃhitā* and *Tantra*, such as *Pādmasaṃhitā* and *Lakṣmitantra*. Among these, the *Pauṣkara*, *Sāttavata* and *Jayākhya Saṃhitās* are known as *Ratnatraya* due to their importance and perhaps for having served as the nucleus, as it were, for *Parameśvara*, *Īśvara* and *Pādma Saṃhitās* which are followed now for temple worship.

In determining the antiquity of the *Pāñcarātra* the materials that are available are very scanty. The *Pāñcarātra* doctrines are associated with the *Puruṣa-sūkta*[15] of the *Ṛg-Veda*, which is, as it were, the foundation stone for all future Vaiṣṇavite philosophy. It is said in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that Nārāyaṇa, the great being, wishing to transcend all other beings and becoming one with them all, saw the form of sacrifice known as *Pāñcarātra* and by performing the sacrifice attained his purpose.[16] The *Nārāyaṇiya* section of the *Sāntiparvan* refers to the *Pāñcarātra* doctrines which prevailed in the *Śvetadvipa* which was visited by Nārada. The reference in the *Mahābhārata* cannot be completely relied upon because it is extremely difficult to fix the date of composition of the different portions of that work.[17] An interesting evidence is furnished by two ancient Tamil works, namely, *Cilapatikāram*[18] and *Paripāṭal*[19] (Second Century A.D) which refer to the Garuḍadhvaja and the images of Saṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and Aniruddha. The description of Viṣṇu as given in the poems of *Paripāṭal* referred to here follows closely the description of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being in the *Pāñcarātra* texts which have come down to us and it definitely refers to

14. Introduction to *Lakṣmītantra*, pp. 10 to 13.
15. Ahir. S. ch. 59.
16. Sat. Br. 13.6: 1.
17. cf. *History of Indian Literature Vol. I* (Calcutta University) *pp.* 465 and 475; and Dr. S.K. Ayyengar's *Proceedings and Transactions of the Second Oriental Conference, Calcutta, 1923.*
18. CLP. 5, ll. 169–73; ibid., 19. ll. 7–10.
19. PRPL. 3, 4.

the four *vyūhas* and the *vibhavas*. There is the further statement of the character of immanence (*antaryāmitva*) clearly made in the poem. Another poem in the same collection[20] makes a special reference that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are the deities installed in Tirumāliruñcōlai, a sacred place near Madurai. This poem gives in circumstantial detail the features of Vāsudeva-Saṅkarṣaṇa, so fully that it leaves in little doubt that this worship had established itself in the remote south much earlier than the period to which the poem actually refers. There are references also to the *Trivikrama avatāra* and to the lotus-eyed Viṣṇu in the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*[21] (First Century B.C.). Again, the Besnagar inscription (last quarter of the Second Century B.C.) refers to the setting up of a *Garuḍadhvaja* (column surmounted by the figure Garuḍa) at Vidiśā in honour of Vāsudeva by his *Yavana* devotee Heliodoros of Takṣaśilā.[22] Another inscription from Besnagar refers to the erection of a Garuḍa Column for a temple of Viṣṇu. The Ghosundi inscription (Rajasthan) of the first century B.C. records the construction of a *pūjā-śilā-prakāra* (stone-enclosure for a place of worship), styled as Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka by a devotee of Viṣṇu who had performed the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice in honour of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva.[23] The Nanaghat inscription (Bombay State) of about the same age, belonging to the queen of a *Sātavāhana* performer of Vedic sacrifices including the *Aśvamedha*, begins with an adoration of Saṅkarṣṇa and Vāsudeva, among others.[24] These epigraphs support the fact known from literary sources regarding Vāsudeva's association with Garuḍa and therefore with Viṣṇu, and with Nārāyaṇa, considerably before the birth of Christ. Dr. S.K. Ayyengar has however traced the mention of the word 'sāttvata' in the *Aitareya*[25] and *Śatapatha*[26] *Brāhmaṇas* and in determining the date of *Pāñcarātra* these references

20. ibid., 15. However, the mode of worship in this shrine is not of the *Pāñcerātra* kind.
21. *Kuṟaḷ*. 1103.
22. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, No. 669.
23. *Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 91 f.
24. ibib., pp. 186 ff.
25. Ait. Br. 2.25; 26; ibid., 8.14: 3.
26. Sat. Br. 13.5: 4, 21.

seem to be of the highest value. It seems very probable that within a few centuries after the Mahābhārata war (3100 B.C) the human character of Kṛṣṇa was forgotten and he was defied along with his relatives, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and their worship was made a special feature of a particular tribe, or a section of a people who came to be recognized as belonging to the *Pāñcarātra* or the *Bhāgavata* or the *Sāttvata* or the *Vāsudeva* school.

In his *Mahābhāṣya*, Patañjali explains[27] the word '*vāsudeva*' as the name of Bhagavān, thereby meaning the divinity of Vāsudeva, who is proclaimed as the Supreme deity in the *Pāñcarātra* texts, *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and other ancient books. This would suggest clearly a date for the prevalence of *Pāñcarātra* principles at least before 800 B.C. which is the date of Pāṇini on whose *sūtra* Patañjali commented. This makes clear the popularity of these doctrines during several centuries before 600 A.D which could be fixed as the beginning of the Āḷvār period.[28]

The *Pāñcarātra* literature is, indeed, vast, but it has been shown that most of the literature is full of ritualistic details and that there is very little philosophy in it. But there are some *Saṃhitās* like *Jayākhya-saṃhitā*, *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā*, *Viṣṇu-saṃhitā*, *Parama saṃhitā*, *Pauṣkara-saṃhitā*, *Lakṣmi-tantra* and others which have philosophical elements in them. The theoretical philosophy in all of them is mostly inseparably bound up with the story of creation. There is, however, great difficulty in fixing the age of these texts. Some of these texts refer to the Āḷvārs and their worship.[29] Further, there is mention of the need to sing the compositions ofthe Āḷvārs.[30] This would decidedly point out that either the *Saṃhitā* texts which contain such accounts

---

27. *Mahābhāsya* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3: 98.
28. Bāṇa (600 A.D.) enumerates the *Pāñcarātrikas* as the name of a religious sect. Vide *Harṣa-carita*, p. 237.
29. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 34; Īś. S. ch. 8; Upen. S. ch. 4, 5, 7 and 8.
30. Īś. S. 8: 175, 176; 11: 236, 252, 256; 13: 246.

were composed after 900 A.D., or such portions containing those accounts must have been interpolated after 900 A.D. into the body of these texts. Again, some of these texts contain episodes[31] which are not generally found in the Āgamic texts but this need not be taken serious note of for fixing the age of these texts. And again identical passages[32] occur in more than one *Saṃhitā* suggesting the possibility of subsequent additions and alterations into the body of the texts which were already composed.

According to the *Lakṣhmītantra* the Supreme Brahman is Vāsudeva,[33] Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.[34] He is also known as Paramātman,[35] and Para-Brahman.[36] Some other *Āgamas* describe him as Viṣṇu. The Brahman is limitless.[37] He is without a second and is the cause for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of all the worlds. All the worlds arise from Viṣṇu, the Supreme Brahman, who is always with Lakṣmī who is described as *Viṣṇu-śakti* and who acts as accessory for the work of Viṣṇu.[38] Both are in the nature of knowledge[39] and represent one *tattva*.[40] Śrī rests on Him, is the resting place for others, destroys the defects of others and spreads their qualities.[41] She descends down along with Viṣṇu[42]. The word 'viṣṇu' is derived from the root '*viś*', to pervade and therefore means one who pervades every thing in point of place and time.[43] In fact, three roots, namely,

31. Ahir. S. ch. 43, 45; Bṛhad. S. ch. 6 to 13.
32. cf. *Pārameś*. S. 27 : 234 to 336; Pau. S. 27: 28 to 123.
33. L.T. 2: 5.
34. ibid., 2: 6.
35. ibid., 2:1.
36. ibid., 2: 9.
37. Ahir. S. Vol. I, p. 17; L.T. 2: 8
38. L.T. 2: 11, 12.
39. ibid., 2: 27.
40. Ahir. S. 4: 78.
41. ibid., 21: 8, 9.
42. L.T. ch. 8.
43. Ahir. S. 52: 59.

(i) *vi*-meaning going, pervading, producing, attracting through splendour etc., (ii) *ṣac* – to become united inseparably, and (iii) *snu*–to flow, have together, given rise to the word '*viṣṇu*'.[44] Though He pervades all things, yet He is called non-existent because He cannot be perceived by the senses. But, just as the fragrance of the flowers can be intuited directly, so God also can be intuited directly.[45] All things are included in His existence and He is not limited either in time or in space. All the animate and inanimate things are governed for sustenance and nourishment by Him. He pervades all these and hence He is called Nārāyaṇa.[46] The word 'bhagavān' which means respectable is applicable to Vāsudeva.[47] He had taken the world as the property and hence He is called Bhagavān.[48] He envelopes the whole thing by His own knowledge and bliss and the whole universe therefore becomes saturated with Him (*tanmaya*). The universe dwells in Him and He dwells in it. This is the sense of '*Vāsu*'.[49] Or it can mean that He passes through every thing like a thread.[50] He shines Himself by creation etc., sports Himself and is praised always by Gods.[51] He is called Narasiṃha as he destroys the bonds of men[52] and this word means Puruṣottama.[53] By placing men within and remaining all round them, He gets the name Puruṣottama and it is this sense that is conveyed by the word 'narasiṃha.'[54] Since he is free from all worldly limitations, He is known as Paramātman and He is the self of all other selves.[55]

---

44. ibid., 52: 45.
45. Jay. S. 4: 76.
46. Ahir. S. 52: 51 to 53.
47. ibid., 52: 58, 59.
48. Ahir. S. 52: 60 to 63.
49. ibid., 52: 64 and 65.
50. ibid., 52: 66.
51. ibid . 52: 68.
52. ibid., 54: 32.
53. ibid., 54: 50.
54. ibid., 55: 27, 28.
55. L.T. 2: 1, 2; Ahir. S. 2: 26.

The *Pāñcarātra Āgamās* speak of five forms of God: (i) *Para* (the transcendant), (ii) *Vyūha* (the grouped), (iii) *Vibhava* (the incarnated), (iv) *Antāryāmin* (the immanent) and (v) *Arcā* (the idol). According to these *Āgamās* Para Brahman is called Vāsudeva.[56] He lives in a city called Vaikuṇṭha which is guarded by particular persons and which has door-keepers; He is seated in a pavilion of gems on a couch in the form of the serpent Ādiśeṣa, placed on a throne having the eight legs Dharma and others; attended by Śrī, Bhū and Nīḷā; holding celestial weapons, conch-shell, discus and others; adorned with celestial ornaments such as a tiara and others. He is limitless in point of possession of attractive qualities though it is not easy to conceive the supreme deity as having innumerable qualities but what the soul would derive as benefit from these cannot be stated with any degree of certainty and so the *Pāñcārātra* has specified the qualities as six in number viz.. *jñāna* (knowledge), *bala* (strength), *aiśvarya* (lordship), *vīrya* (virility), *śakti* (potency) and *tejas* (splendour) which are passive qualities. Lordship consists in the Lord's being the agent which is strengthened by His independent will.[57] Strength in His case is marked by the absence of exertion, though He is ever engaged in the creation of the world.[58] His virility, though productive of results, does not undergo any change and is also called *acyutatva*, that is never falling down.[59] Splendour in His case consists in not looking for any assistance.[60] All these are aspects of knowledge.[61] His qualities are opposed to what is fit to be abandoned (*heyapratyanīka*) and are auspicious (*kalyāṇa*).[62] The Lord's presence is enjoyed by the eternal spirits such as Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena and others and by the delivered souls. He is free from the three limitations of space, time and object.[63]

56. ibid., 2: 9.
57. Ahir. S. 2: 58.
58. ibid., 2: 59.
59. ibid., 2: 60.
60. ibid., 2: 61.
61. ibid., 2: 61, 62.
62. ibid., 2: 24, 25.
63. ibid., 2: 46 to 53.

In *Vyūha* form Para-Vāsudeva Himself assumes four forms viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha for convenience of worship, and for purposes such as creation etc. While Vāsudeva alone possesses the six ideal qualities in the *Vyūha* form, each one of His three emenations possesses only two of the said qualities in turn.[64] Saṅkarṣaṇa, the destroyer of the universe, in charge of the propagation of the *Pāñcarātra* system has *jñāna* and *bala* as the prominent qualities,[65] and he is the deity for the individual self. Pradyumna is the creator of the world and he is in-charge of the propagation of *dharma*, has *aiśvarya* and *vīrya* as the qualities;[66] he is-in charge of the mind. Aniruddha who takes charge of maintenance and awards the fruits of *dharma* has *śakti* and *tejas* as the qualities[67] and is in charge of *ahaṅkāra*.[68] The four *Vyūhas* are described as possessing certain weapons. Besides the *Vyūhas*, there are twelve sub-*Vyūhas* derived therefrom three from each with the names Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara.[69] The images of Viṣṇu are distinguished to represent these twelve forms by varying the order of arrangement of the four appurtenances conch (*śaṃkha*), discus (*cakra*), club (*gadā*) and lotus (*padma*) held in four hands of each image. The names of these twelve sub-*Vyūhas* are recited by pious Vaiṣṇavites every day; they are said to protect the devotee's body if represented on the same (fore-head etc.) by painted vertical lines. These twelve subsidiary *Vyūhas* are regarded as the deities superintending each month, representing the twelve suns in each of the *rāśis*.

64. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, pp. 32 to 35.
65. L.T. 10: 27-33; Ahir. S. 5-21. 22.
66. ibid., 10: 34 to 36; Ahir. S. 5: 22-23.
67. ibid., 10: 37 to 38; Ahir. S. 5 :23, 24.
68. Dr. Schrader points out that the statements regarding the cosmic activities of the *Vyūhas* are somewhat contradictory in nature and quotes instances from L.T., Viṣ. S. and Ahir. S. ibid., p. 38. Vide also *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 56 to 57.
69. L.T. 4: 27.

The *Vibhava* mode consists of the *avatāras* (divine descents) of Viṣṇu. There are several of them mentioned in the *Āgamas*. The principal *Vibhavas* are thirty-eight,[70] but the chief of them are ten: Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise); Varāha (Boar), Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma, Rāma, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalki. The principle of Divine Descent is set forth in the *Gītā*.[71] The *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā*, however, enumerates thirty-nine *avatāras*.[72] This includes the additional one called *viśākhayūpa*, also called *Viṣṇuyūpa* which is a divine pillar in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The four faces of this are prominently occupied by Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva respectively duly representing the waking, dream, deep sleep and the transcendent stages of meditation which a devotee is required to adopt.[73] It is said that from this arise the descents and *arcās* of God.

In the form as *Antaryāmin* the Lord resides in the heart of the selves as the inner controller of the self. In another of His forms He stays within our heart as the object of our meditation. This form can be seen only by yogins and it accompanies the individual souls even when they go to heaven or hell.

The fifth form of God is *Arcāvatāra* (descent in the form of image). The idol is the most concrete of God's forms. When certain images are made of earth, stone, or metals, and are properly installed with proper ceremonials and invoked by *mantras*, they are inspired with the presence of God and with His special powers.[74] The belief is that God descends into those idols and makes them divinely alive,[75] so

70. L.T. 11: 19 to 25 and *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*, p. 42.
71. Bh. G. 4: 7, 8.
72. Ahir. S. 5: 50 to 56.
73. For details vide L.T. 10: 27 to 30; 11: 9 to 18; Sat. S. 4: 7 to 20; 11: 21 to 25; Introduction to *Lakṣmītantra* pp. 22 to 25.
74. Par. S. 36: 391; 38: 3 to 13; *Viṣṇudharma* 103: 16, 30; Pau. S. 36: 391.
75. Sātt. S. 6: 22.

that He may be easily accessible to His devotees and also to give facilities for concentration. The Lord comes in there due to the power of a particular *mantra* uttered.[76] Because of the Lord's presence, these idols become *aprākṛta* having all the six ideal qualities. *Bimba*, *bera* and *pratimā* are also the terms used to refer to *arcā*. Among the modes of worship that of the idol is said to be laudable, the others being mental, or sacrificial. This is because the mind and the eyes are pleased when the idol is worshipped with flowers.[77] The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* contain the procedures for installing the images of the devotees of God and for worshipping them.[78] One of the *saṃhitās* refers to the use of *Saṭhārī*.[79] The Ālvārs are described as having shrines.[80] Their birth is predicted in one of the *Āgamas*.[81]

The act of worshipping God is called *yāga*[82] or *ijyā*. Special imortance is attached to the performance of *bhūtaśuddhi* which takes the shape of the utterance of *mantras* in order to cleanse one's physical frame of impurities in order to make it fit for offering worship to the deity.[83] Significance of the ringing of the bell while offering worship is explained.[84] Worship of the deity could be carried out in one's own residence as part of the daily routine.[85] It could also be done in villages and towns for the welfare of others. For this purpose, temples are built so that persons who get initiated into doing the act of worship could work for the participation in it of others who are not and also could not get initiated.[86] The holy

76. cf. Pau. S. 38 : 3 to 13; 15 to 30.
77. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra* 1 : 13, 14.
78. *Viṣṇutattva* ch. 13, 14; V.T. ch. 19; V.R.S. ch. 25; H.G.S. ch. 27; *Pārmeś*. S. 8: 194 to 209; Bhār. S. 3: 54; Mari. S. Vim. Kal. ch. 19.
79. P.P.S. ch. 8.
80. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*, ch. 34.
81. Īś. S. 8 : 175, 176.
82. cf. Pārameś. S. 9 : 180 to 187 for details on this.
83. Pārameś. S. 3 : 140 to 222; L.T. ch. 35.
84. ibid., 6 : 64 to 104; Mari. S. Vim. kal. ch. 9.
85. Sau. S. ch. 50; Pau. S. ch. 22; Śrīdh. S. ch. 38 Pārameś. S. 6 : 243 to 245; Bhṛ. S. 1 : 13, 14.
86. Ānan. S. 3 : 25; Pād. S. *caryā-pāda* 1 : 9, 10.

places, where temples are erected, are held to be of four kinds.[87] *Svayam Vyakta* (self-manifested) is of the first kind. The Lord has revealed Himself in these places. The shrines at Śrī Raṅgam, Tirumalai, Śrīmuṣṇam and others belong to this type. To the second kind which is called *Daiva* belong temples at Kāñci and other places where God's presence was brought through the efforts of deities like Brahmā. *Saiddha* represents the third kind according to which God has come to occupy the shrines for the sake of eminent persons like sages. The shrines at Tiruvallikkēni, Tirukkōvalūr and Kumbakonam belong to this kind. The last category is styled as *Mānuṣa* according to which men of piety are able to install images as in the case of modern temples. It has been stated in the *Āgamas* that among the centres of worship those that have manifested themselves are the best.[88] Śrī Raṅgam, Vēṅkaṭādrī (Tirumalai), Haśtigiri (Kāñci) and Nārāyaṇādrī (Melkote) are mentioned as four places of the Lord.[89]

The *Pāñcarātra* texts adopt the *Saṃkhya* principles of evolution of matter.[90] What exists becomes transformed into another and does not get destroyed on any account.[91] In this respect, these *Āgamas* represent a distinct line of treatment which is not followed by the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school of *Vedānta*, though it is much idebted to these *Āgamas* for the religious doctrines. Śrī is emphatically declared to be Viṣṇu's potency which is never separate from Him and which represents the Lord's desire to create the world.[92] She takes the forms of sound (letters), six qualities, *vyūha*, *mantra*, deities to be meditated by the devotees and the world of animate and inanimate beings.[93] She creates, maintains and withdraws the

---

87. Īś. S. 20: 112.
88. ibid 3: 178, 179.
89. ibid., 20: 112.
90. L.T. 12: 39, 40; Ahir. S. 3: 2.
91. cf. Bh. G. 2: 16. For a detailed treatment of this, vide Introduction to *Lakṣmītantra*, pp. 29 to 32.
92. L.T. 2: 11, 12, 22 and 23; Ahir. S. 3: 11.
93. ibid., 22: 10 to 28; cf. ibid., 6: 3 to 25.

world and vanishes from the sight of people who could not understand Her real nature and bestows favours on the suffering humanity.[94]

Bhakti and *Prapatti* are the means to attain salvation according to these *Āgamas*. *Bhakti* is the direct path to perfection as it leads to the very heart of religious consciousness. The knowledge of Brahman when it takes the form of worship becomes the means for *mokṣa*. *Yoga* with its limbs is declared to be the means. A devotee is one who knows the real nature of the *vyūha*, who is devoted to the practice of the duties enjoined in these texts for performance at definite times during the day and constantly mediates on the *mantra* of twelve syllables (which glorifies Vāsudeva). A devotee who worships Viṣṇu after understanding His nature, will have material and spititual goals in his hand.[95] Hence *cakras*, *maṇḍalas* and *mudrās* are recommended.[96] The various *mantras* have to be practised and the results obtained.[67] This method could be described as *yoga* materials for worship.[98] Vāsudeva is the object of this meditation. The devotion of the Lord assumes two forms viz., absence of allegiance to no other Lord and having no aim except service to the Lord. This is *Sāttvata dharma*. There is nothing which the Lord cannot give to His devotee. Hence he shall not make Him any request. A devotee of Viṣṇu shall not beg Him of food, wealth, children, age and others even when he is in danger, for the Lord gives all of them even though He is not requested.[99] If the devotee forgets Him because of his happy condition, then he gets into dangers.[100] Devotion to the Lord is the cause of all prosperity and its absence leads to dangers.[101] Through meditation on

---

94. ibid., 12: 13, 14.
95. Pau. S. 33: 77; cf. Sāṇḍ. S. ch. 7.
96. ibid., 33: 80 to 83.
97. ibid,, 33: 91 to 127; L.T. ch. 18; ch. 34.
98. ibid., ch. 34.
99. Par. S. 30: 7, 8.
100. ibid., 30: 23, 24.
101. ibid., 30: 27.

Lakṣmi, people would obtain salvation.[102] A devotee shall ask the Lord this much: "Please give me devotedness at your will. What have I not acquired in the world as I have surrendered myself into You.?"[103] The results obtained through devotion are the same whether the devotees who are poverty-stricken and therefore offer worship even without flowers and fruits or they being rich worship Him through offerings in the fire etc.[104] Details regarding the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* are mentioned.[105] Offering oneself to the Lord is called *hṛdyāga* (sacrifice of the heart). This is called mental worship in some of the *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās*.[106] Various postures of the *yoga* have been described.[107] Methods of meditating on God are also given.[108] The five *aṅgas prāṇāyāma* and others are said to be essential for purifying the arteries (*nāḍi*) and bringing the vital airs under control.[109] The arteries are also described.[110] *Mantras* acquired from a good preceptor are capable of giving enjoyment and salvation.[111] One whose mind is cleansed through *karma* can undertake this mode of worship. For those who are incapable of adopting this means and are unable to tolerate any delay in getting salvation, *prapatti* or self-surrender takes the place of worship.

The doctrine of *prapatti*, or *nyāsa*, or *śaraṇāgati* as the means of winning the Lord's grace has been described in *Ahirbudhnya-sṃhitā*.[112] It is a sort of prayer or adoration which carries with it the conviction that the sense of egoism and the possession that we have in all things due to beginningless, instinctive passions and desires, is all false and the

102. Sātt. S. 12: 84,
103. Pau. S. 31: 151, 152.
104. ibid. 32: 122, 123.
105. Ahir. S. 31.
106. ibid., 31: 3, 4; Īś. S. ch. 2.
107. ibid., 31: 31 to 46.
108. Īś. S. ch. 24.
109. ibid., 32.
110. ibid., 32.
111. Īś. S. 3: 68.
112. Ahir. S. ch. 37; Sāṇḍ. S. ch. 13; LT. ch. 17.

adorer should feel that he has neither independence nor anything that he may call his own.[113] "My body, my riches, my relations do not belong to me, they all belong to God"; such is the conviction that should generate the spirit with which the adoration should be offered. The adorer should feel that the process of adoration is the only way through which he can obtain his highest realization, by offering himself to God and by drawing God to himself at the same time. The purpose of adoration is, so to say, the supreme self-abnegation and self-offering to God, leaving nothing to oneself. The adorer must always be fully conscious of the greatness of God in all its aspects.[114] Hence *prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati* can be defined as a prayer for God's help in association with the conviction of one's being merged in sin and guilt, together with a belief in one's absolute helplessness and a sense of being totally lost without the protecting grace of God.[115] The person who takes to the path of this *prapatti* achieves the fruits of all *tapas*, sacrifices, pilgrimages and gifts, and attains salvation easily without resorting to any other method.[116] He is superior several times to those of good conduct, good learning and given to meditation.[117] *Prapatti* or *nyāsa* is thus an *upāya-jñāna* and not an *upāya*; for it is a mental attitude and does not presuppose any action. It is like a boat on which the passenger merely sits, while it is the business of the boatman to do the rest.[118] One who becomes an *Ekāntin* shall refer to himself as a servant of Viṣṇu and not by his family name or by a reference to his village. The person who surrenders himself to the Lord shall be considered to be flawless, even if he had been an atheist and of bad conduct.[119] It is the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* that have, for the first time, laid the foundation for the doctrine of *prapatti*. Even here, the *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā* and *Lakṣmītantra* have

113. Sātt. S. 12: 84
114. Ahir. S. 37: 27, 28.
115. ibid., 37: 30, 31; L.T. 17: 60 to 83.
116. ibid , 37: 34, 35.
117. ibid., 37: 25, 36.
118. ibid., 57: 46 to 49.
119. Sātt. S, 16: 23.

played a dominant role in giving an elaborate account of *nyāsa* together with its subsidiaries (*aṅgas*).[120] These *Āgamas* exerted a profound influence on the Āḻvārs, who, in their turn, created a deep impression on the *Ācāryas* like Nāthamuni, Āḷavantār, Rāmānuja and others.

The next point for consideration is the position that the *Gītā* occupies in the development of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. Even a very cursory reading of the *Paramasaṃhitā* and the *Gītā* would show similarity of teaching between the two too close to be neglected and regarded as accidental. The nature of the teaching as well as the details point to the affiliation of the one with the other. The teaching of *Pāñcarātra* is ascribed to the Supreme Deity of the *Bhāgavatas*, Vāsudeva, later on identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa leading to very important conclusions in regard to the nature of *Pāñcarātra* itself. The reference to the name *Vāsudeva* in the metrical *sūtras* of Pāṇini[121] and the Patañjali's interpretation likewise, make it clear that these had some conception of a divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva worship apart from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. Therefore the acceptance of Para-Vāsudeva as the originator of the *Pāñcarātra* teaching seems to be fairly correct position. This is borne out by a statement made by Kṛṣṇa himself in the *Bhagavadgītā* where he makes the reference that He taught this "*yoga of Pāñcarātra*" to Vivasvān, the Sun, and then the Sun taught it to Manu and Manu to Ikṣvāku; and then the statement follows that this in course of time had been forgotten.[122] Para-Vāsudeva is distinct from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva often spoken of as Vāsudeva as he was an *avatāra* of the original Para-Vāsudeva. All the literature of the *Pāñcarātra*, direct and indirect, speak of the supreme in the one form or the other, particularly the more general class of writings than the set of *Pāñcarātra* texts. This position of the *Gītā* therefore seems confirmatory of what is said in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* in

---

120. Ahir. S. 37: 2, 27, 28; 52: 14; L.T. 17: 74; 66: 81.
121. Pāṇini 4.3: 95 to 98.
122. Bh. G. 4: 1, 2.

regard to *Pāñcarātra* itself, its origin and the general tenor of its teaching.

The word '*sāttvata*' signifies a class of Vaiṣṇavites. The devotees of Viṣṇu are called *Bhāgavatas*, or *Ekantins* or *Sāttvatas* who are associased with the *Pāñcarātra* system. The word '*sat*' means reality and goodness.[123] Kṛṣṇa belonged to the *Sāttvata* clan and so the teaching of the *Gitā* may be taken to represent a gist of traditional religion which Kṛṣṇa inherited as the son of Vāsudeva in the family of the *Sāttvatas*. Viṣṇu was worshipped as the Supreme Deity in this family.[124]

The *Gitā* is a manual of teaching *bhakti* as the most efficacious method of attaining to salvation, and as such, and as inculcating Viṣṇu *bhakti* specifically, it could be regarded as a manual of the *Pāñcarātra* school. The similarity between the *Pāñcarātra* teaching, and the teaching of the *Gitā* from the doctrinal point of view, is so close that one cannot resist the conclusion that it was intended to be a manual of *Pāñcarātra*. Even though it has been regarded that *Pāñcarātra* is in conflict with Vedic ritualistic teaching,[125] it does make provision for the religious needs of the four *varṇas*, at any rate specifically and distinctly.[126] It also makes provision for the four-fold aims in life. It is therefore a code of ethics, a *dharma śāstra*. The principles of *jñāna-yoga* (the path of knowledge) and *karma-yoga* (the path of works) as embodied in the *Gitā* are in tune with those mentioned in *Paramasaṃhitā*.[127] In dealing with the fate of those who have faith in God but cannot control their senses, the *Gitā* says, they, in course of time, come down to this world to a holy place and are born in the family of people who are pure and prosperous and this idea is comparable with the idea mentioned in *Pauṣkara-saṃhitā*.[128] The eight-fold nature

---

123. ibid., 17: 26.
124. *Gītārahasya*, p. 518.
125. cf. Bh. G. 2: 42, 44, 45, 49. 52, 53.
126. Sātt. S. 2; 11; M.Bh. *Bhiṣma*. 66: 39, 40.
127. Bh.G. 3: 3; Par. S. 10: 3, 4.
128. ibid., 6: 41; Pau. S. 41: 15.

of the Lord as mentioned in the *Gītā* is exactly the same as in *Lakṣmī-tantra*.[129] The message of the *Gītā* is open to all without distinction of race, sex or caste and it declares that people who are lowly born, women, *Vaiśyas* as well as *Śūdras* attain to the highest goal when they take refuge in the Lord and the same idea is found in the *Paramasaṃhitā*.[130] The principles of knowledge and devotion and the fate of those who give up their bodies thinking of the Lord alone as found in the *Gītā* are identical with those embodied in the *Paramasaṃhitā*.[131] The account regarding the Cosmic Tree as found in the *Gītā* and in the *Paramasaṃhitā* is one and the same.[132]

There are specific details with regard to the erection of temple[133] and the methods of installation of idols[134] in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. Such specific details as to the particular spots or regions in the temple where the idols of Narasiṃha, Vāmana and others are to be installed[135] have been mentioned in these *Saṃhitās*. Twenty-six forms of Viṣṇu are enumerated and described.[136] Images of various deities are to be installed in the *vimāna* and to be worshipped.[137] Details regarding the features of deities at the entrance of the temple have found a place.[138] Mention has been made of the features of idols.[139] Such details as the characteristic marks of the idols are found in the *Āgamas*.[140] It has been specially

---

129. ibid 7: 4; L.T. 15: 26.
130. ibid.. 9: 32; Par; S. 7: 24.
131. ibid., 10: 9; 7: 5; Par; S: 30: 81.
132. ibid., 15: 1; Par. S. 26: 3.
133. Īs. S. ch. 16; Pau. S. ch. 42; *Śrīpraś*. S. 5, 6 to 8.
134. Pau. S. 43: 1 to 19; Jay. S. ch. 20.
135. ibid., 43; 56 to 59.
136. ibid. S. 36: 126 to 254.
137. Īś. S. ch. 3.
138. ibid. ch. 9.
139. ibid., ch. 17.
140. ibid., ch. 23

mentioned that the *Vaikhānasas* should not touch the idol.[141] If they offer worship, then installation is again to be done.[142]

Every temple of Viṣṇu has the flagstaff (*dhvajastambha*). Devout worshippers bend before it and then enter the shrines. This act of bending is to be explained by treating the flag-staff as representing the *Viśākhayūpa* which is required to be meditated upon. This staff must have the figures of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva on each one of the four sides as its base.

There are several idols in one and the same shrine. There is the idol which is fixed in the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbhagṛha*) and it shall not be removed from the place at any cost. It is called *Mūlabera* or *Dhṛuvabera*. There is the idol which is taken out in procession both inside and outside the temple and it is known as *Utśavabera*. During festivals there is the sacred bath (*avabṛtha*) at the conclusion when a separate idol called *Tīrthabera* is taken to a tank or river and is given a plunge there.[143] Some idols may be in a sleeping posture as in Śrī Raṅgam, or reclining posture as in Kumbakonam, or seated at Kāñci or standing posture as in Tirumalai and Kāñci. The very basis for having more than one idol of the same deity is to enable the devotees participate in the festivals in many ways.

These *Āgamas* contain various details regarding the worship of the idols.[144] Almost all the *Āgamas* state the importance of the idol which is a concrete form of God required for worship. Neither worship, nor meditation nor singing in praise is possible in a formless object.[145] Three kinds of worship are stated to be possible viz., worship

---

141. ibid., 19: 135.
142. ibid., 19: 458.
143. The purposes of having these is well explained (vide: Bhṛ. S: *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 8).
144. Pau. S. ch. 37.
145. Par. S. 3: 5, 7.

through action, worship through word and worship through the intellect.[146] Making use of sandal paste, flowers and other accessories for worship to the accompaniment of *mantra* is *karmayajña*.[147] Muttering the name of God, reciting hymns remaining pure and attentive is *vākyajña*.[148] Leaving aside every thing external and worshipping the Lord mentally is *manoyajña*.[149] Methods of meditation on the Lord has been stated.[150] All can worship irrespective of caste and sex,[151] old age, or scholarship. Among the three modes of worship, the mental one is said to be the best.[152] Thinking of God with love and affection is said to be true devotion[153] and worship done without devotion is not at all as it should be.[154] Eight-fold devotion has been stated viz., (i) worshipping God for ever, (ii) abiding by standards of conduct and ethics, (iii) faith in the Vaiṣṇavites, (iv) great regard for understanding worship, (v) effort to do worship by himself, (vi) deep interest in listening to talk about or stories of God, (vii) unwillingness to do harm to others, and (viii) non-dependence on doing worship of Him.[155] Specific details regarding the worship of central deity (*mūlabimba*),[156] worship of Lakṣmī and Sudarśana,[157] and worship of Garuḍa and other retinue[158] are found. Methods of initiation have been stated in these texts.[159]

Mention has also been made about the annual festivals of the temples and how they are to be conducted; the purpo-

146. ibid., 3: 28.
147. ibid., 3: 24, 25.
148. ibid., 3: 25, 26.
149. ibid., 3: 26, 27.
150. Īś. S. ch. 34.
151. Pau. S. 3: 29, 30.
152. ibid., 4: 70.
153. ibid., 4: 71.
154. ibid., 4: 72.
155. ibid., 4: 72 to 75.
156. Īs. S. 6: 3.
157. ibid.. ch. 7.
158. ibid., ch. 7.
159. Īś. S. ch. 21; Par. S. ch. 7.

ses of conducting those festivals have also been stated.[160] On such occasions the instruments of music are to be sounded; Sanskrit, Prākṛt or Tamil songs are to be sung.[161] The Four Thousand Tamil Verses are also to be sung by the Vaiṣṇavites.[162]

The *Vaikhānasa* is another type of *Āgama* followed by the Vaiṣṇavites. Though the followers of this *Āgama* are now a small minority they constitute an important sect among the Vaiṣṇavites of South India. There are different legends concerning the sage Vikhanas, the founder of this *Āgama* who is the follower of *Kṛṣṇayajur Veda*. One is that Brahmā descended himself as Vikhānas down to earth to organize the worship of the Lord in His *arcā* form. He wrote also the *Vaikhānasasūtra* to guide the people for leading a virtuous life consistent with the doctrines which he preached. The present text *Vaikhanāsasūtra*, into which the precepts of Vikhānas expanded in the course of centuries is the latest of the *sūtras* of the *Taittīriya śākhā*. According to W. Caland, the *Smārta sūtra* section, comprising both *gṛhya* and *dharma* precepts, preceded the compilation of other section, the *Śrauta-sūtra*, which includes an elaborate *mantra saṃhitā*, and is also called *Aukheya sūtra* because the Vaikhānasas (*Aukheyas*) constituted a *śākhā* (branch) with the full cmplement of *Saṃhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Sūtras*. Vikhānas taught the doctrines of this kind of worship to Atri, Marīci, Kāśyapa and Bhṛgu each of whom brought out his version in detail of the doctrines viz., *Atri saṃhitā*, *Marīci-paṭala*, *Jñānakāṇḍa*, *Bhṛgu-saṃhitā* and other works. More Vedic hymns are used in the *Vaikhānasa* school. This system of worship was also known as *Śrauta śāstra*.

The *Vaikhānasa-saṃhitās*, like those of *Pāñcarātra*, have four divisions viz., *caryā*, *kriya*, *jñana* and *yōga*. Worship of the deities is of three kinds; mental, oblation and idol. But the *Vimānārcana kalpa* mentions Viṣṇu worship as two-

160. ibid., ch. 10.
161. ibid., 11: 36, 37.
162 ibid, 13: 246.

fold namely *amūrta* (formless) that is *hōma* and *mūrta* (in form) that is *arcā*.[163] But in the *Vimānārcanakalpa* four methods have been mentioned for taking to God's worship namely *japa*, *hōma*, *arcana* and *dhyāna*. *Arcana* is worship in the temple of the Lord in the form of image. Meditation is the yogic practice. Among these, *arcana* is said to be the best method.[164] In this type of *Āgama* God is in His five-fold states as in *Pāñcarātra* and the Supreme Principle is Nārāyaṇa with Śrī (*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in one) Śrī being ever associated with Viṣṇu in all his five-fold states. But there is a different *Vyūha*, namely, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha.[165] The primary form is Viṣṇu. He is said to be the sage the indweller of the self.[166] Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha are the four-fold forms of Viṣṇu. The four *Vyūhas* are representatives to afford prosperity to the four castes [167] Among these, Puruṣa, is full of *dharma*. Satya is knowledge and of the nature of lustre. Acyuta is of unlimited wealth and is the Lord of Śrī. Aniruddha is detachment and destroyer of everybody.[168] The ten incarnations of Viṣṇu have been mentioned.[169] There is a reference to the five kinds of Narasiṃha., viz., (i) born from mountain, (ii) born from the pillar, (iii) Sudarśana Narasiṃha, (iv) Lakṣmī Narasiṃha and (v) Pātāla Narasiṃha.[170]

There are more temples in South-India today under the *Vaikhānasa Āgama* than under the *Pāñcarātra*. Different kinds of idols have been mentioned.[171] The idol for festival may be standing with the goddesses seated on both sides.[172] In some places like Tirukkuruṅkuṭi there are two idols for

163. Mari: S. Vim. Kal. 1.1: 1.
164. ibid., ch. 95.
165. M.Bh. *Anugītā*. 109.
166. Bhṛ *S. Kriyādhikāra*. 24: 99.
167. Atri. S. ch. 37.
168. Mari. S. Vim. Kal. 95.
169. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 11.
170. ibid , 11: 27 to 59; Vim. Kal. 57.
171. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. 5.
172. ibid., 6: 24.

festival.[173] Offering of cooked food is in vogue. This is in practice in the temple Nācciyārkōyil.[174] Five idols are to be installed along with that of Viṣṇu namely Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Praduymna, Sāmba and Aniruddha which are known as Pañcavīras.[175] There are measurements mentioned for the formation of villages, construction of temples and installation of idols.[176] Principles regarding the construction of *prakāra*, *maṇṭapa*, *gōpura* etc., have been laid.[177] Though Viṣṇu alone is the Supreme Deity according to this *Āgama*, worship of Vināyaka, Durgā and Saraśvatī are included when the Lord and Lakṣmi are to be worshipped.[178] Worship of Viṣṇu only is the means of salvation.[179] Initiation is necessary for the practice of temple-worship. Traits of a spiritual preceptor have been mentioned.[180] The *Ācārya* shall be one who follows the *Vaikhānasa-sūtra*.[181] Devotion to the Lord is eight-fold namely, (i) affection to His devotees, (ii) applauding His worship, (iii) devotedness to hear His exploits and stories, (iv) getting overpowered in tone, eyes and limbs (while worshipping Him), (v) recalling Him to mind, (vi) absence of show in regard to Him, (vii) to be ever subordinated to Him and (viii) inability to live without Him.[182] The Vaikhānasas do not worship the Āḻvārs, *Ācāryas* and *Maṭhādhipathis* (pointiffs or monāstic heads), though owing to the strong influence of Rāmānuja school, images of Āḻvārs and *Ācāryas* were set up in some temples under Vaikhānāsa *Āgamic* worship; nor do they recognise Āṇṭāl as the Lord's consort on a par with Lakṣmī; nor do they brand their bodies with

173. ibid., ch. 17.
174. This is a place which acquires the name of the temple. It is a place near Kumbakonam. The place is referred to as Tirunaṛaiyūr in the hymns of Āḻvārs.
175. Bhṛ. S: *Kriyādhikāra*. 29, 30, 131, 132.
176. Mari. S: Vim. Kal. 3.
177. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra* 5; Mari, S: Vim. Kal. 11.
178. ibid., ibid., 15.
179. Mari. S: Vim. Kal. 94.
180. Bhṛ. S. 6. *Kriyādhikara* 1: 22 to 25.
181 Mari. S: Vim. Kal. 1. 2: 1.
182. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra* 24: 100 to 102.

the Vaiṣṇavite emblems of cakra, saṅkha etc., nor, again do they recite the the *Tamil Prabandham* during worship. The mention of Āḷvārs in some texts must have been due to interpolation after the period of the Āḷvārs [183]. Details regarding the principle of expiations for lapses have been mentioned.[184]

Information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites is found in the *Āgamas*.[185] According to these *Saṃhitās*, people who live in sacred places (*divya deśas*) are rid of their sins and get the favour of the Lord.[186] Though the deeds themselves would not get destroyed by becoming a mortal in a sacred place, the results of these deeds get lost.[187] Mention has also been made of the places of pilgrimage in these *Āgamas*.[188] It has been clearely stated in these *Āgamas* that the Lord is present for those who perform *niṣkāma karma* in all figures and idols.[189] The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, as it has been already stated, prescribe a way of life and rules for worshipping the God both in the houses and temples. These who have descended in the line of priests maintain the traditional worship, and have the right to perform the worship in temples. Others shall get initiated[190] and then do it. The *Āgamas* prescribe a five-fold division of the day and a routine of life to the Vaiṣṇavites.[191] Every day, after offering food to the Lord, the Vaiṣṇavites shall be made to sing the Four Thousaud Tamil Verses.[192] Methods of worship are also found.[193]

---

183. ibid., ibid., 34: 2 to 4.
184. ibid., ibid.; 26 and 27.
185. Jay. S. ch. 22.
186. Pau. S. 1: 31, 32; 36: 55, 56.
187. ibid , 36: 65, 66; Sātt. S. 7: 120.
188. Par. S. ch. 25.
189. ibid., 36: 80.
190. Īś. S. ch. 21; L.T. ch. 20.
191. L.T. ch. 28; Par. S. ch. 27.
192. Īś. S. 13: 246.
193. L.T. 36: 55.

Specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor (*Ācāryalakṣṇa*) are found in these *Āgamas*.[194] Again the characteristic features of *Ācārya* and *Śiṣya* have been mentioned. The procedure with regard to initiation has also been stated.[195] Principles regarding the performance of annual ceremonies,[196] detailed procedures in matters of expiations for lapses of all kinds have been stated.[197] One should follow the established codes of good conduct[198] and shall not even think of violating them.[199] Emphasis is laid on the need to worship the devotees of the Lord.[200]

The word *'yāga'* is used to refer to the act of worship, *'yāgaśāla'* for the place where the holy fire is worshipped on the occasion of festivals, *'avabṛtha'* for the sacred bath taken at the conclusion of the festival, *'dikṣā'* for the strictly religious life which the temple priest takes up during the occasions of the festivals and *'dīkṣita'* to refer to the temple priest. All these show that the rituals in the temples represent the Vedic ritualism.

The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* have been responsible for the marking of the arms at the top of men and women with the heated conch and discus.[201] Besides, the vertical mark on the forehead with white mud and red pigment is also enforced by them and it is held that without this mark which is called *ūrdhvapuṇḍra,* no rite, however faithfully rendered, would bear the result.[202] Tirumalai, Tirunārāyaṇapuram, Śrīnuṣṇam and others are said to be the places from which this

194. Jay. S. 17: 46 to 62.
195. L.T. ch. 41.
196. ibid., ch. 23.
197. ibid., ch. 25; also Īś. S. ch. 19.
198. Sātt. S. 16: 23.
199. L.T. 17: 94 to 96.
200. Bhār. S. ch. 5.
201. Par. S. 15: 959 to 973, 979 to 983; 17: 585 to 590 Vedānta Deśika cites Vedic authority for this practice (*Saccaritrarakṣā*, p. 43). Pau. S. 8; 40, 41; Bhār S. 3: 67.
202. *Pārameś.* S. 3: 1 to 22; Bhār. S. 3: 65; Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 37.

mud is to be acquired.[203] The *Āgamas* emphasize the need to offer whatever eatable or objects like sandal and flowers to the deity and partake of it. The remaining portion is called *śeṣa* and is said to confer on him who takes it much good.

The peculiar feature of the *Vaikhānasa* school is that only those who are born in the families which adopt the way of life laid down in the *Vaikhānasa-sūtra* are eligible for worshipping the deity in the temples where the *Vaikhānasa* mode is adopted. Those who belong to the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya castes, are alone qualified for this worship.[204] The *Pāñcarātra* has been more liberal in extending the scope for worship to others as well. This method of adoration could be adopted by all for worship in the house (*gṛhārcā*)[205]. Even in temples, those who belong to the family of traditional line of priests, have the primary qualification to offer worship while others could do so only by getting initiated.[206] The catholicity of the *Pāñcarātra* mode has resulted in the adoption of this mode of worship even for house worship among all people except those who follow the *Vaikhānasa* principles.

The statements[207] which the texts of the *Pāñcatātra* and *Vaikhānasa* contain condemning each other's practices have to be explained as implying the eagerness of the exponents of each school to assert the individual sanctity and authority at the expense of those of the other school. Really speaking, there is more agreement than divergence between the teachings of these schools. Both maintain the supremacy of Viṣṇu. There is also the concept for *vyūhas* in both. From the very ancient times, the methods of worship in important shrines like Śrī Raṅgam, Kāñci, Tirumalai and Tirunārāyaṇapuram have been in vogue according to both. While

---

203. Nārad. S. ch. 76.

204. Śrī Praś. S. 50: 160 to 165.

205. MBh, Bhīṣma 65: 39, 40; Sātt. S. 2: 11.

206. Pād. S. Caryā 1: 8.

207. Ānan. S. 13: 1 to 4. For details vide: Introduction to *Lakṣmī-tantra* pp. 7, 8.

the *Vaikhānasa* mode is followed in Tirumalai, the *Pāñcarātra* mehod is adopted in other places. More than all this, the metohd of worship is according to the *Vaikhānasa* principles in the shrines of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika at Śrīperumputūr and Kāñci. Both the schools adopt the concepts of *vibhava*,[208] *arcā* and *antaryāmin*.[209]

The *Āgamas*, which are primarily concerned with the worship of the *arcā* form of God, are found thus to utilize for this purpose, the principles and doctrines of other branches of study. The philosophical doctrines and inquiries about creation and destruction, nature of God, self and world and others are dealt with in some of these *Āgamic* texts. Linguistic occultism in the form of *bījākṣaras*, and *mantras* and mystical diagrams[210] play a dominant role. Icons, installation of them and temple building play an important role and here as well as in the previous one, the principles of architecture have been put to the superior purpose of preparing the means of worshipping the deity. Yogic practices and domestic observances have been of immense help in shaping the conduct of the priest and devotee for perfecting his life. The public festivals (*utsava*) are the external display of the zeal of the architects of temple worship to attract even those who are indifferent to the path of *dharma* and make them share the benefits of the religious communion. The temple processions with all the display of attractions such as music have been drawing people from far and near so that they mingle together without the feeling of any kind of disparity. The dragging of the huge temple cars, floating festivals and others could be mentioned specifically here for such an attraction. In a way, the Indian tradition has much to its benefit by the harmonizing features of the *Āgama* literature which has brought together the brighter achievements

---

208. Mari. S. Vim. Kal. ch. 21; Atri. S. *Samūrtārcanādhikāra* ch. 58 to 61; L.T. 11: 19 to 25.

209. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra*: 24:99; Ahi. S. 59: 36; L.T. 2: 1, 2; Satt. S. 6:22.

210. Pau. S. 5: 10.

of the various branches to study to fulfil the one task of showing the greatnes of the Lord with whom the ordinary people also could have communion.

Jitantā Śtotra is said to form part of the *khila*[211] which are additional hymns to the *Ṛg-Veda*. Since it is in praise of Viṣṇu, it is called *Śtotra*. Though it is not accented, it is referred as *mantra* in the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas*. Ēkata, Dvita and Trita, the three sons of Brahmā are said to have taught this to sage Nārada and asked him to recite this while propitiating Viṣṇu.[212] The *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā*[213] contains an exposition of the first *śloka* of this *Śtotra*. The *Parama-saṃhitā*[214] and other *Pāñcarātra* texts[215] contain references to this Śtotra. This Śtotra has 128 *ślokas* grouped within six divisions, each one being called *Jitāntā*. The first division refers to Viṣṇu[216] as creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. The Lord is requested to pardon the sins committed by His devotees.[217] The devotee finds it difficult to worship Him[218] and requests to be His servant for ever.[219] This is to be recited at the conclusion of *Abhigamana*. The second *Jitantā* refers to God's charming personality,[220] qualities and *vyūhas*. The self shall beg the Lord for pardoning him for the lapses[221] while worshipping Him and so is intended to be recited after *Ijyā*. With all the limitations[222] imposed by the mortal body, the self expresses its incapacity for properly worshipping[223] Him in the third

211. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 51.
212. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai's *Vyākhyāna* on *Jitāntā* 1: 1, p. 3.
213. Ahir. S. ch. 53.
214. Par. S. 23: 46 to 63; 21: 40; ch. 13; L.T. 17: 20.
215. L.T. 17: 20.
216. Jitantā 1: 3.
217. ibid., 1: 16.
218. ibid., 1: 19.
219. ibid., 1: 15.
220. ibid., 2: 254.
221. ibid., 2: 38.
222. ibid., 3: 4, 5.
223. ibid., 3: 7 to 10.

Jitantā. Uninterrupted service[224] is requested for here. During *Upādāna*, this shall be recited. The fourth *Jitantā* contains a graphic description[225] of the body of the Lord limb by limb and is to be recited during *Svādhyāya*. The Lord is requested to lead the self in whichever way He finds suited for the self's approach to Him[226] and this is to be recited as the fifth *Jitantā* during *Yōga*. The last *Jitantā* describes Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa[227] in Dvārakā which is presented in the minutest detail with reference to the temple,[228] festivals[229] and devotees worshipping Him. All these six divisions begin with the words *'jitam te'* which mean 'victory to you'. The purport of this *Śtotra* is stated to lie to prove that Viṣṇu is the goal and the means.[230] Viṣṇu is the Lord for both the gods and demons.[231] The divine form is taken up by Him only to enable His devotees approach him for refuge.[232] The Lord shall help the self for retaining the knowledge of Him even in later births.[233] He is everything for the self and there is nothing which the self need aspire to obtain without Him.[234] The enlightened self yearns to get at the Lord at Whose feet it could render service.[235] The Lord is the only refuge for the selves which suffer in bondage.[236] The prayer which is offered to the deity is Upaniṣadic in expression and tone.[237] The *Śtotra* ends with a prayer that good men shall offer their benedictions to the Lord.[238]

224. ibid., 3. 16.
225. idid., 4: 3.
226. ibid., 5: 19, 20.
227. ibid., 6: 1.
228. ibid. 6: 2 to 9.
229. ibid., 6: 10 to 14.
230. Parāsarabhaṭṭa: (*Śrī Raṅgarājastava*) – *Śtotramālā* p. 109.
231. *Jitantā* 1: 2.
232. ibid., 1: 5.
233. ibid., 1: 11.
234. ibid., 2: 7.
235. ibid., 2: 18 to 37.
236. ibid., 4: 13.
237. ibid., 5: 1 to 16.
238. ibid., 6: 15.

In the development of Rāmānuja School of Vaiṣṇavism, this *Śtotra* played a dominant role in more than one respect. It emphasized the importance of the path of self-surrender.[239] The devotee shall wish to continue to be devoted to Viṣṇu in all the births which he would be taking in the future.[240] The desire of the devotee to render service to the Lord in whatever situation he is placed in life is referred to here.[241] The Supreme abode (*Paramapada*) is characterized by the *ṣāḍguṇya* and is free from the three qualities of matter.[242] It is this *Śtotra* that may perhaps have influenced Periyāḷvār in uttering the words of benediction (*Pallāṇṭu*) for the Lord which gave rise to the act of *maṅgalāśāsanam*. The *Śtotraratna*[243] of Yāmuna and the *Gadyatrava*[244] were written under the influence of this *Śtotra* and that of the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The soul-stirring devotional element in the *Nālāyiram* is not a little due to this *Śtotra*. It may be stated in this connection that this piece does not form part of any known work of antiquity. As it is cited in the *Pāñcarātra* texts and as it refers to the *vyūhas*, it could be treated on a par with the *Āgamic* texts. The *Mahābhārata* too contains a passage of similar import.[245] Its antiquity cannot therefore be questioned but for want of evidences, it deserves treatment along with the *Āgamas*.

---

239. cf. *Jitantā* 1: 2, 8.
240. cf. ibid., 1: 13.
241. ibid., 2: 8.
242. ibid., 2: 18.
243. *Śtotraratna*, 5, 60; cf. *Jitantā* 2.7; ibid., 62; cf. *Jitantā* 2. 11.
244. *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. cf. *Jitantā* 1: 16; *Śrī Vaikuṇṭhagadya*; cf. *Jitantā*, 5.
245. MBh. Śānti. 339: 134.

THE CONCEPT OF BHAKTI IN THE ANCIENT LORE

Dependence of man on God for his existence and liberation and the need for leading a life fully dedicated to Him out of devotion unto Him received treatment in the *Purāṇas* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. That this could be done and shall be done with more ease through worshipping the *arcā* form of God is found emphasized in the *Āgamas*. The principles of the path of devotion are reiterated, as it were, in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya, with greater emphasis on the unique nature of devotion. These do not directly refer to the *arcā* form of worship but what they preach has full implication for it in the context of the aspects of devotional life. They could be taken to belong to a period which must have been coeval with that when the *Āgamic* tenets were in practice, though not when the *Āgamic* texts were not compiled.

In this context it must be remembered that the path of devotion which is dealt with in the *Purāṇās*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Āgamas* and *Bhakti sūtras* is distinct from the one which is preached in the *Upaniṣads*. The element of devotion, which knows no limitation of any kind, gets full treatment in the former while the *bhakti-yoga* which is based on the *Brahma Vidyās*[1] is treated in the latter which permits eligibility only to those who belong to the first three castes. The rigour of austerities and the dangerous pitfalls that lie in wait for those who are unwary in adopting the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, as taught in the *yoga* system of Patañjali, are attendant on those who follow the *bhakti-yoga*. The path of devotion, which is treated in the sources other than the *Upaniṣads*, is attractive to the suffering humanity and is a never-failing means to win God and a much easier mode for adoption than others which include *bhakti-yoya* and hence its popularity.

1. Vide : Appendix I for the List of *Brahmā Vidyās*.

The origin of the cult of *bhakti* in Hinduism is shrouded in mystery. It is an indigenous growth in our country suited to its genius and culture. The germs of this cult are found in the *Vedic* hymns and the *Upaniṣads*.[2] The Vedic hymns of Varuṇa, Savitṛ, and Uṣas are replete with sentiments of piety and devotion. The cult of *bhakti* blossoms forth in the epics and *purāṇas*[3] and later devotional literature;[4] there it is not satisfied with the impersonal *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*, but converts *Brahman* into the personal God or *Īśvara*.

Treatises on Philosophy and Religion proclaim in one voice that God cannot be apprehended by senses. He is beyond the ken of logic or argument, and is attained only through whole-hearted devotion. Penances and religious observances lacking in devotion cannot lead to the attainment of God. The revelation of God to man is the highest boon granted by Him to man.[5] The devotees should meditate upon God with minds wholly concentrated upon Him.[6] It has been stated that God is always fond of those who are devoted to Him.[7] No one is dearer to Him in the three worlds than those who are enlightened with wisdom and possessed of high souls. More dear even than these persons is one who is entirely devoted to Him.[8]

Love of God is insisted upon by all schools of Vaiṣṇavite thought as an essential pre-requisite for the operation of Divine Grace and therefore posited as a condition for salvation. Nārada defines *bhakti* as of the nature of intense love for God.[9] It is, according to him, as if a dumb man who has tasted a delicious food could not speak about it. It is of the nature of love (*prema*) which reaches its acme of

2. Kath. Up. 2: 23; Mun. Up. 3. 2: 3; Sv. Up. 6: 23.
3. Bhag. P. 11: 14.
4. It reaches its pinnacle in the hymns of Āḷvārs.
5. MBh. *Sānti*. 340: 16, 17.
6. ibid., ibid., 340: 19.
7. ibid., ibid., 343: 54, 55.
8. ibid., ibid., 343: 65.
9. N.B.S. 2.

perfection (*parama*). The word '*parama*' indicates three things: (I) Devotion is undivided love for God, free from attachment to worldly objects; (ii) it is not overshadowed by knowledge and action; it is the highest end and it is not a means to any other higher end; and (iii) it is manifested in thought, word and deed. It may be stated that love of God is akin to love for near and dear ones; but there is a world of difference between the two. The object of all worldly attachment is perishable, transient and finite, while the object of devotion is imperishable, permanent and infinite. Love of God is not entirely different from love for earthly objects as there is attachment in both. Prahlāda, the prince among the lovers of God, therefore, offers the following prayer: "May not that uninterrupted attachment, as is entertained by undiscriminating men towards earthly objects, desert my heart, while I am constantly meditating upon Thee.[10] Love for things that are fleeting and perishing is the cause of misery. Love of God, Who is the eternal source of all things, makes for everlasting happiness. The love for other objects is secondary, while the love of God alone is primary. Husband, wife, progeny, wealth, cattle, castes, the worlds, the gods, the *Vedas*, the elements and all the rest have no intrinsic value in themselves. They are dear for the sake of God. In short, God is Love. Love may, therefore, be called His *differentia* which is tantamount to Tirumūlar's statement that Śiva is Love – '*Aṉpē Civam*'.[11]

As Nārada states, Divine Love is *amṛta* (nectar or immortality).[12] The statement has various shades of meaning,[13] all of which are important in the context and it is to suggest them all that Nārada has used the word '*amṛta*' in preference to other words such as '*mukti*', '*kaivalya*' etc. Śāṇḍilya says: 'It has been taught in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* that he who has devotion to God becomes immortal. Or he who lives, moves, and has his being in God becomes

10. V.P. 1. 20: 17.
11. *Tirumantiram* – 270.
12. N.B.S. 3.
13. N.B.S.56 to 64.

immortal'.[14] That is the highest religion of man from which arises unmotivated and uninterrupted devotion to God, which fills the soul with bliss.[15] *Bhakti* is defined as realization of God alone as deserving to be called 'mine', accompanied by deep love (*prema*), and without attachment to the desired object, God, being entirely possessed by and absorbed in the devotee. *Prema* is the most concentrated love for God, which is full of the most intense attachment, and which purifies the heart completely. Divine love (*prema*) is the completion and perfection of devotion.[16] Devotion is higher than the other means of salvation, because it is its own reward.[17] It is not the means of any other goal; it is the highest goal, the *summum bonum* of life. The path of devotion is the easiest of all and superior to all.[18] It does not require any other proof; it is self-evident. It fills the soul with complete peace and ecstasy of supreme joy.[19]

Sāṇḍilya thinks that mere knowledge does not constitute devotion. Persons having no knowledge, as for example, the milkmaids of Bṛndāvan, attained liberation simply through devotion to the Lord.[20] According to Nārada, devotion is not identical with faith which forms a part of all actions. To start with, there must be belief in God; then this is deepened into faith; at last, faith is deepened into devotion.[21] *Bhakti*, the burning faith in God, is free from desire, and is of the nature of inhibition of all desires by which, however, is meant not the extinction of all desires, but the consecration of all desires and actions to God. It is almost impossible to suppress all desires and passions; but they can be canalised towards God from their being directed

14. S.B.S. 3.
15. Bhāg. P. 1. 2: 6.
16. This mode of *bhakti* is seen in the hymns of Āḷvārs, especially in the poems of Āṇṭāḷ, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and Nammāḷvār and so a separate treatment is given under the caption 'Bridal Mysticism'.
17. N.B.S. 25.
18. ibid., 81.
19. ibid., 58 to 60.
20. S.B.S. 4 to 6.
21. N.B.S. 84.

towards earthly objects. One should dedicate all actions to Him, and cherish all passions, desires, anger, egoism and the like only for Him.[22] It is said that the mind of the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is engaged in meditating upon His lotus feet; his words are engaged in describing the glories of the abode of Viṣṇu; his hands are engaged in cleaning the temple of Hari; his ears are engaged in hearing the pleasant talks about the Lord; his eyes are engaged in seeing the image of Kṛṣṇa; his body is engaged in coming into contact with His devotees; his nose is engaged in smelling the sweet scent of *tuḷasī* leaves placed at the lotus feet of the Lord; his palate is engaged in tasting the offerings made to Him; his feet are engaged in going on pilgrimage; his head is engaged in bowing to the feet of the Lord; his desires are engaged in serving the Lord. Thus the whole being of the devotee is entirely dedicated to God.[23]

The *Bhāgavata* mentions nine marks of devotion: listening to the name of God, chanting His name, recollection of Him, rendering service to Him, worshipping Him, saluting Him, servitude, friendship and self-dedication to Him.[24] Sāṇḍilya's view is that ardour in His worship and talks of His glory characterize a devotee and if they draw the mind away from God and disturb the bliss of the soul, they are of no avail. Nārada holds the view that dedication of all our actions to God and the feeling of extreme uneasiness on forgetting Him are the good marks of devotee. The milkmaids of Bṛandāvan dedicated their whole life to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa and felt extreme uneasiness when He went out of their sight even for a short time[25]. Sāṇḍilya observes that honouring the Lord, honouring any thing or creature that evokes His remembrance[26], pangs

---

22. S.B.S. 65.
23. Bhag. P. 10. 29: 15; cf. Peri. Tm. 11.7.
24. Bhāg. P. 7. 5: 22, 23.
25. N.B.S. 19, 21. cf. Nammāvḷār's position is of the same nature. It is not possible for a man of God-realization to forget Him at any time.
26. cf. TVM. 4. 4: 1 to 9. cf. Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki's experience.

of separation, aversion to all things that are not associated with Him, constant singing of His glory, preservation of life for His sake, the conciousness that "I and everytning that is mine are Thine", the consciousness that He is immanent in all things, and absence of hostility towards Him are the marks of devotion.[27]

Devotion is broadly classified into two kinds, namely, primary and secondary. Secondary devotion is of three kinds, *tāmasa*, *rājasa*, and *sāttvika*. If a person's devotion is motivated by malevolence, arrogance, jealously or anger, his devotion is said to be *tāmasa*. If, actuated by the desire for fame, wealth or any other object of enjoyment, he worships God, his devotion is said to be *rājasa*. If, in showing devotion towards God, he is actuated by the desire to do duty for the sake of duty, or to burn up the roots of *karma* (latent-desires) or to please God, his devotion is said to be *sāttvika*.[28] The primary or the highest kind of devotion is absolutely unmotivated.[29] It is devoid of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*. It is the spontaneous uninterrupted inclination of the mind towards God. It does not admit the gifts of living in the same world with God (*sālokya*), exercising supernatural powers of God (*sārṣṭi*), being near God (*sāmipya*), possession of a form similar to that of God (*sārūpya*), and union with God (*sāyujya*).[30] The devotee who clings to God with his whole soul does not crave even for absolute independence of the soul (*kaivalya*), not to speak of other things.[31] Secondary devotion, according to Nārada, is three-fold according as *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* is predominent in the character of the devotee; or according as the devotees are distressed, inquisitive, or selfish.[32] Each preceding kind of devotion is superior to each succeeding one.[33] According to Śāṇḍlya, primary

---

27. S.B.S. 44.
28. Bhāg. P. 3. 29: 8 to 10.
29. ibid. 3. 29: 12.
30. Ibid, 3. 29: 13.
31. ibid., 11. 20: 34.
32. N.B.S. 56. cf. Bh.G. 7: 16.
33. N.B.S. 57.

devotion is single-minded, whole-hearted devotion to God. It is the supreme devotion which directly leads to liberation. All other processes are of secondary nature and are indirect causes of liberation, inasmuch as they only lead to primary devotion.[34] Sāṇḍilya says that chanting the name of God, reciting it repeatedly, salutation to the deity, and worship of God constitute secondary devotion. They lead to the knowledge of the deity, through which attachment to Him (*rāga*) is engendered which ripens into love (*prema*) of God.[35]

Devotion to God manifests itself in many forms. There are several kinds of human relationship such as filial affection, friendship, reverence, servitude etc. The devotee may hold himself related to God in any of these means. The nature of his attitude depends upon the degree of intimacy with God. The attitude is termed as *bhāva*. The most important of these attitudes are six: *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, *śānta*, *kānta* and *mādhurya*. *Dāsya-bhāva* is the attitude of a servant to his master. Hanuman is the apt classical example of an ideal servant of God. This type of relationship marks the beginning of love. At a later stage devotion gets deepened and is comparable to the love and regard that a man has for his friend. For example, the relationship between Kucela and Kṛṣṇa, and that between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. Still higher and more intimate is the *vātsalya-bhāva*, the love of the parent to the child. For example, love of Kausalyā for Rāma and of Yaśodā or Devakī for Kṛṣṇa. *Śānta-bhāva* is the converse of *vātsalya*; it is the feeling of a child to its parent e.g., love of Dhruva and Prahlāda for God, who were the children of God in every sense of the term. *Kānta-bhāva* is the love of the wife to the husband; as between Sīta and Rāma, and between Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa. This is a closer kinship than those mentioned so far. But the closest of all is *madhura-bhāva*, the romantic love of the lover and the beloved, as in the case of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The last two types should not be understood to mean sensuality. What is *Bhagavat-kāma* is transempirical, and it is described analogi-

34. S.B.S. 83, 84; cf Bh. G. 18: 68.

35. S.B.S. 56, 57 with commentary.

cally as *viṣaya-kāma*. But the resemblance between them, is like that between the dog and the dog star.

Spiritual practice must begin naturally with thinking about what one has to attain and knowing the means to attain it. That is the reason why every system of religion insists upon some sort of scriptural study under some teacher. The worthier and purer one's ideas of God arrived at by the proper use of the intellect, the purer, worthier and truer one's interpretation of one's experiences will be. The aspirant should not take delight in vain argumentation and scholastic disputations for their own sake.[36] The proper place for reason is provided for in spiritual practice by the insistence on reflection or *manana*. It is also held that knowledg and devotion are interdependent.[37] If intellect refuses the aid of feeling and will, it remains dry intellectual dogma. If love is unassisted by intellect and will, it may be blind sentimentalism; and if will is not helped by knowledge and love, it remains merely meaningless, aimless activity. But Nārada thinks that devotion is the fruit of itself,[38] being the means as well as the end of devotion. Sāṇḍilya however feels the necessity of concentration of mind and cultivation of the intellect for the culture of devotion. The cultivation of the intellect for acquiring certain knowledge of Brahman should be continued till devotion is completely purified. Valid knowledge of Brahman is the end of the intellect. Still, listening to the scriptures (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*), and intellectual convinction (*nididhyāsana*) lead to the true knowledge of God. Knowledge is absolutely necessary for firmness and purity of devotion. The life of devotion to God, according to Sāṇḍilya, need not necessarily be a purely emotional one. The venerable saint upholds the cult of devotion enlightened by reason.[39] An echo of this idea is found in the *Kūrma-purāṇa* also: "Of all the devotees, he who ever worships Me with knowledge is most dear to Me, and no

36. N.B.S. 74.
37. ibid., 29.
38. N.B.S. 30.
39. cf. Bh. G. 7: 16, 17.

other."[40] It is said that the sages who have faith in God have a vision of Him in their own selves by means of devotion combined with wisdom and renunciation.[41] Devotion to the Lord gives also rise to knowledge.[42] That is said to be the real wisdom "which generates attachment to God."[43]

A life of devotion is not necessarily a life of inaction. The clarion call of the *Gitā* is to give up weakness of the heart, shake off lethargy and impotency, and do one's duty in the world.[44] One should live an active life completely dedicated to God. The *Bhāgavata* also gives the same message. That is real action, *karma*, which pleased God.[45] The actions that are done for the pleasure of God, the actions that are consecrated to Him, give rise to devotion, and devotion, in turn, gives rise to knowledge.[46] One should surrender all actions to God without any desire for their fruits.[47] The complete surrender of the soul to God is the highest truth.[48]

The *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* contain an elaboration of the teachings of the *Gitā* and the *Bhāgavata*. Actions for the preservation of life, such as eating, drinking, and dressing, must be carried on so long as one lives.[49] The body is the temple of God. Instead of making it an enemy and a source of distraction, one should make it an ally and a means of devotion. One is reminded of Tirumaṅkaiyālvār's rejection of the ascetic way of self-mortification by self-inhibition.[50] He who renounces the fruits of action, and dedicates all action to God, rises above pleasure and pain, desire and aversion,

---

40. Kūr. P. 2. 4: 24.
41. Bhāg. P. 1. 2: 12.
42. ibid., 4. 29 : 37.
43. ibid., 4. 29 : 49.
44. Bh. G. 2 : 3.
45. Bhāg. P. 4. 29 : 47.
46. ibid., 1. 5 : 35.
47. ibid., 11. 2 : 22.
48. ibid., 7. 6 : 24.
49. N.B.S. 14.
50. Peri. Tm. 3. 2 : 1, 2.

and other pairs of opposites, and attains lasting peace.[51] One should observe the social and moral obligations, and perform religious duties, dedicating them all, including the self to God.[52]

According to Nārada the following are the means for the attainment of devotion : Evil company should be shunned by all means, because it excites lust, anger, infatuation, lapse of memory, and loss of intelligence, and finally leads to utter ruin.[53] Conversation with those who are not with devotees, touching their bodies, sleeping and eating with them, all pollute the souls with sins, and one should fly away from them as from poisonous snakes.[54] Wealth and sex are the two rocks on which many souls are shipwrecked. Atheists disturb one's faith in God. So one should not listen to talks about women, wealth and the character of atheists.[55] Pride, vanity and other vices should be given up.[56] It is not proper on one's part to enter into a controversy about God, or other spiritual truths; or about comparative merits of different devotees, for the simple reason that there is plenty of room for diversity in views, and no one view, based upon mere reason, is conclusive in itself.[57] Devotion to God arises from the renunciation of all objects of enjoyment and of every attachment for them.[58] He who uproots all earthly attachments gives up acquiring and preserving objects of enjoyment.[59] These are the negative means which prepare the mind for the attainment of devotion.

The following are the positive means for the culture of devotion : study of the treatises on devotion; constant

---

51. N.B.S. 48.
52. ibid., 61.
53. ibid., 43 to 45.
54. N.P.R. 2. 2 : 6.
55. N.B.S. 63.
56. ibid., 64.
57. ibid., 74, 75.
58. ibid., 35.
59. ibid., 47.

thinking of their teachings; performance of those duties which are enjoined by them; cultivation and preservation of such virtues as non-violence, truthfulness, purity of body and mind, compassion and faith in higher spiritual realities, and the like.[60] One shall incessantly perform uninterrupted loving-service to God.[61] Devotion is obtained, principally, by the grace of the great souls who are devoted to God, or from the least touch of divine compassion. The company of the great is difficult of attainment, which once attained is bound to awaken devotion. The companionship of devotees is attained by the grace of God alone.[62] The grace of God is followed by the response of the devotees, since there is no distinction between God and His men.[63] Srī Kṛṣṇa says, "I dwell in them, and they dwell in Me."[64]

By attaining devotional love a person becomes fulfilled, immortal and contented.[65] He becomes free from the cycle of births and deaths. He has no more desire for anything. He is free from grief and hatred. Success and failure, gain and loss are equal to him. He becomes intoxicated with joy, absolutely quiet, and completely satisfied.[66] Communing in Him he delights in Himself, sees Him alone, hears Him alone and thinks of Him alone.[67] He is filled with the presence of God. He feels His presence everywhere.[68] He offers his whole being to God. He belongs to Him, and not even to himself.[69] Bhagavan says, "I am like one who is not free. I am entirely dependent on My devotees. My heart is given over to My saintly devotees. I am their beloved. I have no liking either for Myself or for My immortal consort, Lakṣmī,

60. ibid., 76, 78.
61. ibid., 36.
62. ibid., 38 to 40.
63. ibid., 41.
64. Bh. G. 9: 29.
65. N.B.S. 4.
66. ibid., 5, 6.
67. ibid., 55.
68. ibid., 70.
69. ibid., 73.

without the association of My saintly devotees whose sole refuge I am. How can I leave them who have renounced their wives, home, children, relations, wealth, and this world and the next, and completely surrendered themselves to Me? They do not know anything other than Me, nor do I know anything else but them."[70]

Other benefits which result through devotion are: One's sins which can be destroyed by means of penance, charity, chastity, truthfulness provided they are performed with faith, will be completely wiped out. Devotion is the soul of purity.[71] It is the best kind of atonement for all sins. By the constant remembrance of the Lord all other atonements are done away with.[72] According to *Bhāgavata*, the supreme devotion to God can liberate us from bondage.[73] According to Sāṇḍilya, the cause of births and deaths is not want of knowledge, but want of devotion.[74] Want of devotion is the cause of egoism which brings about of *samsāra*. The fire of devotion burns up the sense of '*me*' and '*mine*', purges the soul of egoism by destroying the intellect completely, and brings about liberation.[75] One gets liberated from the bondage of all actions, good and bad, by dedicating their fruits to God.[76] And by complete self-surrender to God, which is the mark of supreme devotion, one can attain the blissful state of Brahman, which is the highest goal of life.[77]

God is the God of Love. There is no barrier of caste, sex or nationality. The *Gītā*, in preaching the cult of devotion, throws open the portals of devotional love and, through it, of salvation to all irrespective of caste, character or sex. Nobody can stand in the way of anybody's right to

---

70. Bhāg. P. 9.4: 63 to 68.
71. S.B.S. 58, 59.
72. ibid., 75, 76.
73. Bhāg. P. 1. 29: 36.
74. S.B S. 98.
75. ibid., 96 with commentary.
76. ibid., 54.
77. ibid., 96.

love God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa assures salvation even to a person of vilest conduct who worships Him with single-minded devotion. Even persons of sinful origin attain the supreme goal by taking refuge in Him.[78] According to the *Bhāgavata*, even a *caṇḍāḷa* is purged of impurity of his caste by firm devotion to God[79] and is dearer to God than a brahmin, sadly lacking in faith.[80] Even a person of low birth is liberated from bondage if he utters the name of God only once.[81] Nārada and Sāṇḍilya also preach the universality of the cult of devotion. "Among the devotees of God, there is no distinction of birth learning, appearance, family, wealth, religious observances and the like, since they all belong to Him."[82] They are suffused with the spirit of God. They realize the presence of God everywhere in and around them.[83] "All persons, even down to the lowest-born, have equal right to follow the path of devotion; it has been taught by generations of authorities".[84] The path of devotion has no artificial restrictions. The desire for liberation is the starting point of devotion and anybody can tread on that highway, the supreme path. It is perfectly democratic in spirit and outlook.

The *Dharmaśāstra* texts are based on the *sūtras* which belong to the *kalpa* section of the *Vedāngas* such as the *sūtras* of *Āpastamba*, *Āśvalāyana*, *Bodhāyana*, *Drahyāyana* and other works. They treat, in the main, the codes of good conduct (*ācāra*), expiations for the sinful deeds which are committed (*prāyascitta*) and wordly transactions (*vyavahāra*). The *Kalpasūtras* deal elaborately with the religious rites which are to be done in the sacred fire and in that connection, they mention the greatness of the deities. Much as they are concerned with the performance of the rites, they do not deal

78. Bh. G. 9 : 30 to 32.
79. Bhāg. P. 9. 4 : 21.
80. ibid., 3. 33 : 7. cf. the sentiments expressed in T.M. 42 and T.V.M. 3. 7 : 9.
81. ibid., 5. 1 : 35.
82. N.B.S. 72, 73.
83. ibid., 70.
84. S.B.S. 78.

with the concept of the deity for worship. The *Smṛti* texts, however, attach some importance to the worship of the deities, but this is done in a rather formal way.

It is in the *Manu Smṛti* that there is the mention of the creation of the world.[85] In this context, the word '*nārāyaṇa*' is explained to apply for Viṣṇu, who is described as the ruler.[86] The first person to have been created by Viṣṇu is Brahmā.[87] The Supreme Being is described to be of the colour of gold and is designated as the Supreme Person. He is to be known through the knowledge which is akin to that which rises while one is partially asleep. This only means that He is to be known without the aid of the sense organs.[88] His name is Viṣṇu and He lies on Ādiśeṣa with Śrī.[89] He is rightly referred to as Acyuta being the support to the world.[90] He dwells within the self which is in the heart.[91] He is referred to as Vāsudeva.[92] Perhaps to show that the person who thinks constantly of Him shall not be made to suffer beyond a limit, the desent of Viṣṇu as Narasiṁha is frequently mentioned and His grace is said to be yearned for.[93] This deity who would not be pleased by any deed other than that which one has to do, shall be pleased by doing one's own. One shall meditate upon Him as enshrined in a temple.[94]

The *Dharmaśāstra* texts prescribe rules to be followed particularly by the devotee of Viṣṇu. Early in the morning one shall wake up from sleep and contemplate on Hari[95] whom

---

85. *Manu Smṛti.* 1: 10.
86. ibid., 12: 122.
87. ibid., 1: 11; *Harita Smṛti* 1: 10 to 13.
88. ibid., 12; 122; vide Kulluka on *Manu Smṛti*.
89. *Harita Smṛti* 1: 9.
90. ibid., 7:5.
91. *Śaṅkha Smṛti* 7: 17
92. ibid., 7: 19, 20.
93. *Harita Smṛti* 1: 2; 2:9; 4: 76; 7: 19.
94. ibid., 7: 21, 22.
95. *Vyāsa Smṛti* 3: 2.

one shall think of while taking bath.[96] The routine work (*āhnika*) may be done by following the *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* mode.[97] This reference should not be taken to have been made under the influence of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamā*, for the routine of the day is divided into eight parts[98] according to the *Smṛti* and so this would only show that the *Āgama* mode of the daily routine was in vogue when this text (*Ausanasi Smṛti*) was written. The sacrifice for God (*daiva-yajña*)[99] which is one of the five daily sacrifices, must have assumed greater significance in later days and with the help of the *Āgamic* influence developed into temple worship. The word '*devagṛha*'[100] used in this context does not make clear whether temples or shrines were in existence in the days of *Kalpasūtras*. There could have been only holy places where the sacred fire was kept burning[101] into which the offerings were made. The word '*devakula*' occurring in the *Pratimā-nāṭaka* of Bhāsa must also be taken to mean a place where images for worship are placed. Such places had some external mark in the form of a weapon or flag of the deity enshrined. The images were made of stone.[102] There were sites set apart for erecting temples or for the use of the deities.[103]

The concept of the *arcā* form of worship was familiar to the authors of some *Smṛtis*.[104] The moment one beholds the Lord from the resting place of His feet up to His crown, one's sins get destroyed. This means that simple offences would even more easily get destroyed.[105] The *Smṛti* texts

96. *Harita Smṛti* 4: 29, 31.
97. *Ausanasi Smṛti* 45: 48.
98. *Dakṣa Smṛti*, ch. 2.
99. *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* 1: 14; 13 1; *Bodhāyana Dharamsūtra* 2.6: 4.
100. *Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra* 2. 8: 2.
101. The place is also called *dhisnya* (vide Kalidasa: *Abhijñāna Śākuntala, IV*).
102. Bhāsa: *Pratimānāṭaka*. Act III. It is also referred to as *Pratimagṛha*.
103. Kautilya: *Arthaśāstra, p. 256*.
104. *Mānava Gṛhasūtra*, 2. 15: 6.
105. *Śāṇḍilya Smṛti* 2: 84.

recommend the worship of *salāgrama*.[106] Saṅkara, the chief exponent of *Advaita*, refers to the worship of *sālagrama* and equates the *sālagrama* with Hari.[107]

The *Smṛti* texts recommend the worship of the deity for obtaining the things which have not been obtained before and for keeping in fact what has been obtained.[108] God shall be worshipped with the chanting of the *Puruṣasūkta*.[109] The deity shall be fondly cherished as a chaste lady would cherish her dear husband, a mother her suckling child, a disciple his master, and a friend his friend. God shall be treated as a master, friend and preceptor.[110]

God likes those who are devoted to His devotees and conversely does not approve of the devotion of one who does not honour His devotees.[111] Those who are devoted in their service to the Lord may or may not obtain the result of their service, but it is said, in an exaggerated way, that those, who are devoted to the service of the devotees, are bound to get the results of their endeavours.[112] Whether it is an animal or man or bird that takes shelter under a Vaiṣṇavite, that is, a devotee of God, it goes to the supreme place along with that devotee.[113] Conversely, those who are treading the wrong path, hate Viṣṇu and speak ill of the Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas* are not fit for companionship. The devotion which is already had would get destroyed in their company.[114]

Atonement for the offences committed could be easily carried out. Addressing God as Vāsudeva, Jagannātha, and other names, one could become freed from the adverse

---

106. *Vṛddhaharita Smṛti* 8: 183, 189.
107. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* on 1. 2: 7, 14; 1. 3: 14.
108. *Yājñavālkya Smṛti* 1: 100,
109. *Harīta Smṛti* 4: 54, 59.
110. *Śāṇḍilya Smṛti* 4: 37, 38.
111. ibid., 4: 86.
112. ibid., 1: 95.
113. ibid., 1: 15.

effects of patricide and of having killed the cow.[115] One who steals the bulbous roots and vegetables belonging to others could expiate by building a temple for God with a garden of flowers attached to it.[116]

The *Bhaktisūtras* and the *Dharmaśāstra* texts thus deal respectively with the path of the devotion and the life a devotee should lead for obtaining the reward of his devoted life. Unlike the former, the *Dharmaśāstra* texts have no primary concern with the act of devotion, but upholding as they do the *Vedic* theism, they incidentally deal with the topic of the worship of the deity. The general aspect of devotion to God (*deva*) which marked the earlier texts, became developed in the later periods into the cult of Viṣṇu and Śiva, the former aligning itself with the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Bhāgavata* and other works on Vaiṣṇavism.

114. ibid., 1: 120.
115. *Satatapa Smṛti*. 1: 24.
116. ibid., 4: 19.

VIṢṆU CULT IN ANCIENT TAMIL LITERATURE

The ancient classics of Tamil Literature, the majority of which so far available, are assigned to the pre-Christian periods, throw much light on the prevalence of and acquaintance with the Vedic study and Vedic rites in ancient Tamil Nad.[1] The worship of Viṣṇu receives a significant treatment in these works though these were not mainly intended to deal with religious matters. They contain references not only to the concept of the deity concerned but also to the cult of the temple worship and the philosophical and religious settings which formed the background of such worship.[2] These works refer to the worship of *Tirumāl* (Viṣṇu),[3] Kṛṣṇa[4] and Baladeva.[5] The verse in the *Purananūṛu* collection[6] (1000 B.C. to 300 A.D.) includes Kṛṣṇna and Baladeva, along with Śiva and Subrahmaṇya, as the four controlling deities of the Universe. This irrefutable evidence that, among the gods commanding worship as Supreme Deities along with the Śaiva pair, is indeed of great significance. The theme ***Pūvainilai***, as it is called in ***Purattiṇai Iyal***, aims at the identification of a ruling monarch with one of the principal deities of the Hindu pantheon viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[7] Loyalty to the patron had ever been an admirable trait of the

1. PRN. 2, 15: cf. *Cankanūlkaḷum and Vaitīkamārkkamum*, pp. 13, 22 to 23.
2. *Cankanūlkaḷum Vaitīkamārkkamum*, pp. 46 to 59.
3. TMR. 1. 12; 1. 151; 11. 164–65; PRMP. II. 29 to 31; II. 402 to 404; MLP. II. 3, 4; MTK. I. 591, 592; KLT. 105, 119, 124. 127; PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
4. PRN. 56, 58, 174, 201, AKN. 59, 175; KLT.134.
5. ibid., 56; KLT. 26, 36, 104, 105.
6. ibid., 56.
7. TLK. 3. 2: 5. II. 9, 10.

Tamils from times immemorial and there are instances where the king is likened to God Verily the king is a protector of the people in the same way as *Tirumāl* or *Māyon* is the protector of the Universe. The *Puranāṉūṟu* verse under reference is a fine illustration of the point. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are referred to in one more place, where a Cola and a Pāṇṭiya are together praised as looking like these gods.[8] One verse in *Akanāṉūṟu* (prior to first century A.D.) refers to the story of Rāma[9] and another verse of the same work *Kuravaikkūttu* (*rāsa* dance) of Kṛṣṇa.[10] The verse in *Kalittokai* (300 A.D.) mentions the victory of Kṛṣṇa against the wrestlers and slaying of them.[11] Apart from these stray references, *Paripāṭal* (third century A.D.) contains six poems in description of Viṣṇu.[12] These are intended to describe the character of Viṣṇu as a deity, and have no more definite object of describing the *Bhāgavata* or any other cult as such. Even so, the description of Viṣṇu as given in two poems[13] by one Kaṭuvaṉ Ilaeyiṉaṉār follows closely rather the description of Viṣṇu as supreme in the *Pāñcarātra* texts and the *Nārāyaṇiya* of the *Mahābhārata* as well. Another poem of the same work by one Iḷamperuvaḷutiyar[14] makes a special mention of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva as the deities installed in Tirumāliruñcōlai. This fact could be confirmed beyond doubt by references in the ancient Tamil Grammar *Tolkāppiyam* (fourth century B.C.) where it is stated that the presiding deity at *Mullai* (pastoral) tract is *Māyōṉ* (*Tirumāl*) and it is significant that He is mentioned first in the *sūtra*.[15] It has already been pointed out that the king has been compared with *Tirumāl*. The ethical literary work *Tirukkuṟal* (first century B.C.) contains two references of this deity.[16]

---

8. PRN. 58
9. AKN. 70.
10. ibid., 232.
11. KLT. 134.
12. PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
13. ibid., 2 and 3.
14. ibid., 15.
15. TLK. 3. 1 : 5. cf. ibid., 30.
16. *Kural* 610, 1103. In the former the reference to the Lord of the three strides and in the latter the abode of Viṣṇu (Paramapadam).

In *Cilapatikāram*, an epic belonging to a slightly later period (second century A.D.) there are a number of references to the temples to Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in the Coḷa capital Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam and the Pāṇṭiya capital Maturai alike.[17] One of the early shrines in the far south is Tirumāliruñcolai[18] which finds mention in *Cilappatikāram* along with Tiruvarankam[19] and Tiruppati[20] as places peculiarly holy to Viṣṇu. In times later than these there are not merely undoubted references, but elaborate descriptions of devotion to the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. These references establish beyond doubt the prevalence of worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva all over the Tamil country.

To come to details. Viṣṇu is mentioned as the foremost among gods.[21] He is often referred to as the pre-eminent deity spoken of in the *Vedas*,[22] which reveal His greatness,[23] and make Him known.[24] He is beyond the faculties of apprehension even for sages whose intellect is perfected by constant meditation.[25] He is foremost not only among gods but also among the demons. He is thus neither the friend nor the foe of any one. His impartial attitude is thus revealed towards the living beings.[26]

Garuḍa is His vehicle[27] and his emblem marks His banner.[28] The conch and the discus are His weapons adorning the left and right hands respectively. The former

---

17. CLP. 1: 5, ll. 169 to 173; ibid., 2 : 14, ll. 7 to 10.
18. ibid., 2: 11, l. 91.
19. ibid., 2: 11, ll. 35 to 40.
20. ibid., 2: 11, ll. 41 to 51.
21. PRP. 13. ll. 1 to 13.
22. ibid , 1. l. 13; 2. l. 57; ll. 12 to 27.
23. PRP. 1. l. 65.
24. NRR. Invocatory verse.
25. PRP. 3. ll. 46 to 52.
26. ibid., 3. ll. 54 to 58.
27. CLP. 2. 17: 28; PRP. 3. l. 60.
28. PRP. l. l. 11; 2. l. 60; 4. ll. 36 to 48; 13. ll. 38-39; PRN. 56.l. 6; 58.l. 14.

when blown by Him causes horror to all His foes.[29] He is ever wearing a garland of *tulaci*.[30] He reclines on a couch of Ādiśeṣa[31] and is to be found generally in the milky ocean.[32] Lakṣmī dwells in the chest of Him[33] who is Her husband.[34] The precious stone[35] *Kauśtubha* adorns His chest. His garment is golden in colour.[36] These are the marks distinctively belonging to Him and serve to distinguish Him from other deities. These also show that He has a divine and auspicious form which could not be described correctly,[37] but on that account, He is not left undescribed by people. They describe Him in expressions which are poor and inadequate and do not have actual relevance to Him.[38] For instance, though Kṛṣṇa, the Lord, is conceived of as having two arms, He is in reality having innumerable arms.[39] Here lies His unfathomable grandeur. The devotees request Him not to ignore their description and prayers, but to accept them and bless them, not minding their littleness.[40]

He is Himself the sacrifice that is performed and is also Himself *dharma* (righteousness). He is the embodiment of *kṛpā*. He is the rectifier of those who are incapable of treading the right path. He is the pain of those who are opposed to His ways. He is the moon and the sun; He is Śiva, the god of destruction; He is Brahmā, the god of creation; in fact He is Himself the very destruction and creation. He is Himself the cloud, *ākāśa*, earth and the Himālayas.[41] It is because

29. ibid., 2. ll. 36 to 40.
30. ibid., 13. ll. 60.
31. ibid., 1. ll. 1, 2.
32. ibid., 13. ll. 26 to 29.
33. ibid., 3. l. 31.
34. ibid., 3. l. 90.
35. ibid., 1. l. 9
36. CLP. 2. 11. l. 50; PRP. 1 : ll. 10, 56; 3 : 1. 88; 13 : 11. 1–2.
37. PRP. 13. ll. 46 to 49.
38. ibid., 4. ll. 1 to 5.
39. ibid., 3. ll. 35 to 45.
40. ibid., 1. ll. 33 to 36.
41. ibid., 1. ll. 37 to 48.

that He is everything that he becomes indescribable. There is nothing outside Him which could be brought in for purposes of drawing similarity or contrast to it from Him. Naturally He is equal to Himself.[42]

All the worlds lose their stability and energy day by day and after aeons, become reduced to a stage when their existence could not be made out. The sun and the moon also become extinct by then.[43] Many aeons pass by. After a long time, matter emerges and from it are produced, in the order, *ākāśa*, air, fire and water the succeeding one emerging from the antecedent. Aeons roll by and after a long long period earth is evolved, from the water. The water is then so staggering that the earth is on the point of getting fully submerged there. Viṣṇu takes the form of the boar then and keeps the earth secure. This is one of the countless sports of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is said to have married the earth known as Bhūdevī. It is humorously remarked here by the poet that His marriage cannot be reconciled since His consort Lakṣmī is ever present in His chest.[44]

The five elements, the sun, the moon and the sacrificer, the five planets which are other than the sun and the moon, the the demons, the twelve Ādityas, the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twin Aśvins, Yama and his servants, and the twenty one worlds together with the beings inhabiting them arise from Viṣṇu and grow in Him. This is the truth which is revealed from the *Vedas*.[45] All these represent Him. Symbolically, the vast earth represents His feet, the sea His garment, the sky His body, the directions His arms and the sun and the moon His eyes.[46] The depiction of the sky as His body receives suport from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.[47] This

42. ibid , 1. ll. 50 to 53.
43. ibid., 2. ll. 1 to 4.
44. ibid., 2. ll. 28 to 35.
45. ibid., 3. ll. 4 to 14.
46. NRR. invocatory verse. This description is also given in more or less similar expressions by Śaṅkarācārya in a *śloka* contained in his *Bhāṣya* on the *Viṣṇu-saharsranāmam*.
47. Tatt. Up. 1. 6: 14.

must be the reason for taking the Lord to be blue in colour.[48] In a way, this description of the Lord may be treated as lending support to the relation of self and body as existing between Viṣṇu and the world of animate and inanimate beings. In fact, He forms the inner essence of every thing.[49]

He is the father of Brahmā[50] whom He had created for looking after the subsequent creation. As He is the substance itself and its inner, He is not living in it nor is there a place beside Him for others to live in.[51] He is the only Lord who safeguards the twenty one worlds in three parts under the umbrella of His grace, *dharma* being its handle.[52] The twenty-five realities (*tattvas*) serve the purpose of realizing Him through them.[53] He is the protector of all; the discus adorns His right hand[54] in order that He could use it against those who violate His law. He measured the entire region to wrest it from the demon and saved it from deluge taking the form of a boar.[55] He took the form of the swan and saved the earth with outstretched wings from the torrential rain of deluge.[56] His ability to vanquish the foes and His brilliance are found in the sun, His sympathy and splendour in the moon, His tenderness and liberality in the cloud, His powers of sustenance and patience in the earth, His fragrance and effulgence in flowers, His exterior appearance and vastness in the sea, His form and voice in the *ākāśa* and His divine descent and disappearance in the air. All these owe their origin to Him, and exist, as it were, away from Him, but really sustained by Him.[57]

The substance of the teaching of the *Vedas* is that the Lord's complexion is akin to that of sapphire; His eyes

48. PRP. 1. ll. 6, 7.
49. ibid., 3. ll. 63 to 68.
50. ibid., 3. ll. 13, 14.
51. ibid., 3. ll. 69, 70.
52. ibid., 3. ll. 73 to 76.
53. ibid., 3. ll. 77 to 80.
54. ibid., 1. ll. 52, 53.
55. ibid., 3. ll. 19 to 25.
56. ibid., 3. ll. 25 and 26.
57. ibid., 4. ll. 25 to 35.

resemble the lotuses; His words never fail in their import just as a particular day would not but come off; His patience is like that of the earth; His grace reaches one and all without any partiality as the cloud impregnated with water. The utterances of the *Vedas*, oblations, performance of the sacred rites and the sacred fires are God Himself.[58]

The four *vyūhas* of the *Pāñcarātra* school were known to the poets of the ancient Tamil literature. Vāsudeva is held to be dark in complexion having red eyes, Saṅkarṣaṇa to be white with black eyes, Pradyumna to be red and Aniruddha green.[59] The popularity of the *Pāñcarātra* cult during the centuries before the birth of Christ is attested by a reference to the temple of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva already cited above.

Among the divine descents of Viṣṇu those of Kūrma,[60] Varāha, Narasiṃha,[61] Vāmana, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are treated. While those of Kūrma, Narasiṃha and Rāma[62] are dealt with in the brief references, those of Varāha[63] and Vāmana[64] get special attention, but Kṛṣṇa's descent has more and detailed treatment. Viṣṇu's greatness as the saviour of mankind received attention in the descents as Varāha and Vāmana. Balarāma is often associated with Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is mentioned as the tender child of Yacōtai.[65] His playing on the flute was rapturous and fascinated the gopīs.[66] He is said to play on *Vīṇā* also.[67] Some of the deeds of Kṛṣṇa are said to be mysterious and are stated to be incomprehensible. The Lord who could use the snake Vāsuki as the

58. ibid., 2. ll. 52 to 68.
59. ibid., 3. ll. 81, 82.
60. CLP. 2. 12. l: 58.
61. PRP. 4. ll. 11 to 21.
62. AKN. 70; PRN. 378; MNM. 17. ll. 9 to 14; ibid., 5. l. 37.
63. PRP. 2. l. 16; 3. l. 24; 13. l. 36.
64. CLP. 2. 17. ll. 34, 35; 1. 6. l. 55.
65. ibid., 2. 16. ll. 45, 46.
66. ibid., 2. 7. l. 2; ibid. 2. 17. ll. 18, 19.
67. PRP. 3. l. 86.

rope for churning the milky ocean, became Himself fit to be bound by Yacōtai with a rope.[68] Viṣṇu was not hungry, but devoured the world. However, He ate the butter with avidity through severe hunger. He used His feet to measure the entire world, but had to use it in greater frequency when He went to the city of Kauravas as a messenger of the Pāṇḍvas.[69] These show that He being *māyoṉ*[70] and *māyavaṉ*[71] could introduce mysterious activities in His own deeds. There are references to incidents like taking away the garments of the *gopis*,[72] driving the chariot of Arjuna,[73] killing the demon Vatca[74] and hiding the sun with the discus.[75]

Kṛṣṇa married Nīḷā, the daughter of Kumbha, the brother of Yacōtai[76] Tamil literature has introduced a new person Nappiṉṉai by name[77] and made her play a prominent role in the life of Kṛṣṇa. She takes the place of Nīḷā in these classics. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had many exploits in the Gokula during which they stood one on each side of Nappiṉṉai and danced. They changed their positions and danced again. Nārada is said to have written the work *Nārada-śikṣā* treating the *tāla* according to which they danced.[78] When Kṛṣṇa was sporting in the waters of Yamunā with the *gopis*, He took out the bracelet from one of them and made them feel discomfort.[79] Kṛṣṇa is stated to have danced whenever there was some activity in which He engaged Himself. His dance is known as *Alliyam* when He broke the tusk of the elephant

---

68. CLP. 2. 17.1 32.
69. ibid., 2. 17.11 32, 33, 34.
70. PRP. 15. 1. 33.
71. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 27,28.
72. ibid., 2. 17.1. 23.
73. ibid., 2. 17.1 34.
74. CLP. 2. 17.1 19.
75. ibid., 2. 17.1. 26.
76. cf Gar. P. Uttarakhanda, ch. 19.
77. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 16, 24.
78 ibid., 2. 17.11 25, 26.
79. ibid., 2. 17.11 23, 24.

Kuvalayāpiḍa.[80] He played *Kuṭakkūttu* dance when He went to fight with Bāṇa.[81]

Balarāma is considered to be one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and He is quite often treated as having the same status like that of Kṛṣṇa.[82] He is described to have had the emblem of the elephant in his flag and a single ear-ornament.[83] The paradox in the case of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma is that Kṛṣṇa is held to be the younger brother of Balarāma. But He is very ancient and much older. Really He is in between the ancient and the modern. The only way of knowing Him is through the *Vedas*.[84] The paradox that arises here proves only that He is the essence of every thing[85] and so He could present Himself anywhere, at any time and in any form He chooses.

Among the *arcā* forms, the deities at Tirumalai, Tiruvaraṅkam, Tirumāliruñcolai and Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum) are referred to and treated. Tiruvaraṅkam (Śrī Raṅgam) is the holy place on the island created by the branching of the river Kāviri. The deity there is reclining on the serpent couch.[86] Tirumalai which marks the northern limit of the Tamil country is the hill of Viṣṇu,[87] abounding in many streams. The deity in the temple on the hills is Viṣṇu the ornaments on whose person are referred to as dazzling in appearance. The sun and the moon are described as the discus and conch of the Lord. The Lord appears like a blue cloud with sun and moon shining on each side, lightning playing the part of a new garment. He is in the standing posture.[88] Viṣṇu lies on the serpent couch in Tiruvananta-

---

80. ibid., 1. 6. ll. 46 to 48.
81. ibid., 1. 6. ll. 54, 55.
82. PRP. 1. ll. 3 to 5.
83. ibid., 1 l. 5.
84. ibid., 2. ll. 20 to 27.
85. ibid., 2. 1. 20. Vide Parimelaḷakar's commentary on this line.
86. CLP. 1. 10. ll. 156; 2. 11. 1, 6; ibid. ll. 35 to 40.
87. ibid., 1. 6. 1. 30; 1. 8. ll. 1, 2; 2. 11. 1. 41.
88. ibid., 2. 11. ll. 41 to 52.

puram,[89] which is also known Āṭakamāṭam. The Lord takes His abode anywhere. He chooses beneath the banyan or *kaṭampa* tree or in the island formed between the two branches of a river. He may choose the hill or the form of any other deity. He is present every where to carry out the wishes of His devotees and to keep them in carrying out their duties.[90]

There are several hills which defy description for ordinary persons, but were studied and described by eminent poets in their works. Only some among them are useful to people who are provided by them with gold. gems. wood and others. Only a few among these have become the lucky abodes chosen by the deities themselves. One among them is Tirumāliruñcolai which has been chosen as the dwelling place by Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva.[91] This place is beautified by the flow of the river Cilampāṟu.[92] The groves there are ever green and cool. The references which are made to temples in other places point to the existence of shrines for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for whom the flags had the emblems of Garuḍa and Plough respectively.[93] The latter is said to have had the palmyra emblem in the flag.[94] The *Paripāṭal* mentions a temple for Viṣṇu very near to Maturai.[95] The place which is also called Kuḷavāy has also a temple for Ādiśeṣa.[96] The place is also known as Iruntaiyur[97] which is identified by Prof. M. Raghava Ayyengar to be the temple of Kūṭalaḷakar in Maturai.[98]

The temple of Lord Varadarāja at Kāñcī is located in a part of the town known as Tiruvattiyur. The Caṅkam period is known to have been mostly related to the places in and

89. ibid., 3. 26. l. 62; 3. 30. l. 51.
90. PRP. 4. ll. 66 to 73.
91. ibid., 15. ll. 1 to 14.
92. ibid., 15. ll. 21 to 23.
93. CLP. 1. 5. ll. 171, 172; 2. 14. ll. 8, 9.
94. KLT. 104, ll. 7, 8; PRP. 2. l. 22
95. *Paripāṭal Tiraṭṭu*. 1. ll. 1 to 6.
96. ibid., 1. ll. 60 to 64.
97. ibid., 1. l. 5.
98. *Ārāyccittokuti*, pp. 241 to 244.

around Maturai and so the temple in Aḷakarmalai gets great significance in treatment. Śrī Raṅgam and Tirumalai were too well known far and wide through the Tamil region. Tiruvanantapuram which is now in Kerala formed part of the Tamil country and hence found a place for reference in these works. Peruntevaṉār who composed *Mahābhāratam* in Tamil, mentions Tiruveṅkaṭam, Tirumāliruñcolai, Tiruvaraṅkam and Tiruvattiyur as the four places whose names when uttered by the people would relieve them of their sufferings.[99] The non-mention of Kāñcī in the early Tamil classics may be due to the non-representation of the poets from Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam in the Caṅkam period or the loss of the poems containing references to Kāñcī. This is, of course, a negative evidence which could not be pressed too much in the context.

The worship of Viṣṇu is frequently recommended.[100] Final release from worldly bondage could not be got except by worshipping the Lord.[101] Devotion to the Lord is to be preferred even to the correct knowledge that one can get about Viṣṇu and His nature.[102] Worship shall be done only at His feet.[103] One shall wish for the enduring security which the feet of the Lord give.[104] The head of the devotee shall be bent before and near His feet. A devotee shall do this with his relatives also.[105] No one would refrain from worshipping Viṣṇu's feet which are the source of everything and which are capable of cutting the chain of birth and rebirth.[106]

The Lord is ever present in the hearts of His devotees. He is ever cherished by them.[107] Yet, they do not know Him

---

99. ibid., p. 274.
100. PRP. 2. ll. 5 to 19.
101. ibid., 2. ll. 15 to 17.
102. ibid., 1. ll. 33, 34.
103. ibid., 1. ll. 62 to 65.
104. ibid., 1. ll. 63 to 65.
105. ibid., 2. ll. 66 to 77,
106. ibid., 3. ll. 1, 2, 15, 16.
107. ibid., 3. l. 84.

correctly who is exquisitely described in the *Upaniṣads* as having the highest qualities and accomplishments.[108] The devotees of God shall seek Him for refuge. They could offer their worship to the place of God from a distance if they are unable to reach the place[109] and shall, if it is practicable live too near the temple.[110] They shall offer their prayers to Him by addressing Him as Keśava[111] and Nārāyaṇa.[112] Even the gods praise Him as the ancient people did[113]. A devotee shall be free from self-conceit. Once Garuḍa felt proud that because of him Viṣṇu was able to conquer the demons. At this, he was hurled down by the Lord into the nether regions where he had to remain for long and pray for Lord's mercy which was at last granted enabling him to continue as the Lord's vehicle. This incident, which is touched in the *Sāma Veda*, shows that Viṣṇu is the greatest among the gods and that Garuḍa had to seek the grace only of Viṣṇu.[114] The ardent devotee feels that he has become fortunate to share the love of God along with others mainly owing to the good deeds done by him in the previous births.[115] The ideal yearning of a devotee of Viṣṇu is brought to light by describing that the devotee would not feel happy unless he gets the vision of the Lord and serve Him. The ears shall be taken to have served the purpose of their existence by listening to the reputed exploits of Viṣṇu who measured the entire universe in two steps and who went to the forest as Rāma along with His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa. The eyes fail to be lucky if they do not behold Him, His hands, feet and mouth. The eyes should keep cast on Him without even a wink. The only act for the tongue shall be to praise Him Who went to the Kauravas as the messenger of the Pāṇḍavas. Viṣṇu is here identified with Vāmana, Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa in these contexts.[116]

---

108. ibid., 4. ll. 57 to 65.
109. ibid., 15. 1. 35.
110. ibid., 15, ll. 64 to 66.
111. ibid., 3. 1. 31.
112. CPL. 2. 17. 1. 37.
113. PRP., 3. ll. 29, 30.
114. ibid , 3. ll. 59 to 62.
115. ibid., 13. ll. 61 to 64.
116. CLP. 2. 17. ll. 35, 36, 37.

The Tamil classics contain many anecdotes and descriptions of the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata,* and *Bhāgavata* which could not be traced to the Sanskrit sources. There could have existed certain versions not properly recorded but for the first time finding room in the Tamil texts. Three of them which relate to the life of Kṛṣṇa deserve mention here, while others which are of minor interest could be explained while commenting on the relevant portions of the compositions of the Ālvārs. The three[117] are the introduction of Nappiṉṉai,[118] the consort of Kṛṣṇa in Gokulam, Kṛṣṇa's breaking down of the *Kurunta* tree while taking away the robes of the *gopa* maidens who were taking their bath in the Yamunā,[119] and His *Kuṭakkūttu.*[120]

The cult of Viṣṇu, as found treated and referred to in the ancient classical Tamil literature could have come into being in the Tamil country as a result of the influence of the religious doctrines which are recorded in the Sanskrit works. Yet, the development and treatment of this cult have been indigenous and exerted profound influence on the unique growth of the cult which is marked by the erection of temples most of which are found only in regions where the Tamil language is spoken. It is not therefore a surprise if the principles of the cult of Viṣṇu as these are treated in these classics had given impetus to the rise of the religious poetry at the hands of the Āḻvārs.

117. Vide, Appendix III.
118. CLP. 2. 17. ll. 16, 28.
119. ibid., 2. 17. l. 21; AKN. 59 and old commentary.
120. ibid., 1. 6. ll. 54, 55.

TENETS OF VAIṢṆAVISM

The literary sources confirmed by the epigraphical evidences, which have been cited in the previous chapters, lead to the conclusion that Vaiṣṇavism is a faith of the hoary past the origin of which could be traced to the *Vedic* texts. It is also found from these evidences that before the period of the Āḷvārs, there grew up certain tenets which were peculiarly Vaiṣṇavite in character, preached and practised by many a pious soul. These doctrines do not get a systematic treatment in these source books but they have left an indelible and deep impression on the Āḷvārs. The Āḷvārs attached greater importance to the path of devotion than to the other doctrines. It is only after the period of Nāthamuni that these tenets got formulated into a coordinated whole and were given a systematic exposition.

The earliest dogmatic exposition of the religion characterized by devotion centres on the worship of Viṣṇu and so it takes the name of Vaiṣṇavism. The cult has had a long history, going back to very remote times. The deity of this cult bears also the sectarian names Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa Gopāla. These names indicate the four main streams which mingled into one through a period of several centuries to form the so-called religion Vaiṣṇavism.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* represents Vāsudeva as identical with Kṛṣṇa. Vāsudeva is identified with the God Viṣṇu as well as the Supreme Spirit, as a scion of Vṛṣṇi family. The *Mahābhāṣya* (on Pāṇini)[1] gives the forms Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha as derivatives from Vṛṣṇi names, meaning the sons of Vasudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha respectively. The names of the five Vṛṣṇi heroes referred to

1. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4. 1 : 114.

in the Mora (near Mathura) inscription of the first century A.D. are given in the *Vāyu-purāṇa* as Saṅkarṣaṇa (son of Vāsudeva by Rohiṇī), Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva by Devakī), Pradyumna (son of Vāsudeva by Rukmiṇi), Sāmba (son of Vāsudeva by Jāmbavatī (of non-Aryan origin) and Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna) all of whom are known to have been apotheosized and worshipped.[2] Again Patañjali (on Pāṇini)[3] distinctly states that the word '*vāsudeva*' contained in the *Sūtra* is the name of the "worshipful" i.e., one who is pre-eminently worshipful i.e., God. Therefore the worship of Vāsudeva must be regarded as old as Pāṇini's grammar (800 B.C.).[4]

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* usually identify Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Sāttvata family with the highest god, and represent him as the founder of the religion characterized by devotion. This religion is called the Bhāgavata, Sāttvata or Vaiṣṇava Dharma. In the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*,[5] the highest is stated to have been called Bhagavat and Vāsudeva by the Sattvata people; and the *Śāntiparvan*[6] of the *Mahābhārata* states, apparently in reference to the *Gītā* that Sāttvata or Bhāgavata Dharma was taught first by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna.

That Kṛṣṇa with the name Vāsudeva was held in special veneration is evident from the records of Megasthenes and Mathura inscription. There is a reference regarding the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Baladeva (Saṅkarṣaṇa) in a passage of the Buddhistic canonical literature called *Mahaniddesa* and *Cullaniddesa* (first century) which mentions, among others, the worshippers of certain deities including elephant, horse, cow, dog, crow etc.[7] These evidences make clear that

2. cf. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 1944, pp. 82 ff.
3. *Asṭādhyāyī*, 4. 3 : 98.
4. cf. Hopkins, E.W : *Great Epic of India*, p. 391; Macdonell, A.A : *History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 17.*
5. Bhāg P. 11. 6 : 2, 6.
6. MBh. Sānti. 358 : 48.
7. *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 5.

the worship of Kṛṣṇa as Vasudeva was in vogue many centuries before the birth of Christ. The worship of Baladeva or Balarāma who is mentioned with Kṛṣṇa was also prevalent then and it appears that it went out of practice or lost its hold on people after the beginning of the Christian era. His worship[8] is understandable and is justified on account of His place in the list of divine descents of Viṣṇu.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* usually explain the name Vāsudeva as the 'son of Vasudeva.'[9] Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar draws ttention[10] to the commentaries on the *Āṣṭādhyāyi* and the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* and suggests that Vāsudeva is not a patronymic, but the proper name of the person, whose name Kṛṣṇa shows that he belonged to *Kārṣṇāyana gotra* which sprang from an ancient sage named Kṛṣṇa with whom Vāsudeva of a Kṣatriya family of the *Kārṣṇāyaṇa gotra* was identified at a later date. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions the sage Kṛṣṇa-Devakīputra (i.e. Kṛṣṇa son of Devakī) as a disciple of the *ṛṣi* Ghora of the Āngirasa family.[11] Kṛṣṇa is not called Vāsudeva in this work. Vāsudeva's association with Sankarṣaṇa (Baladeva, son of Vasudeva by Rohiṇī) in pre-Christian epigraphs as well as in certain passages of the *Mahābhāṣya* seems to support the epic and purāṇic tradition that Kṛṣṇa was connected with the Yādavas and Pāṇḍavas It has also to be noted that the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* mentions Kṛṣṇa's mother as Devakī which was rather an uncommon name. Again the Āngirasa family to which Upaniṣadic Kṛṣṇa's teacher Ghora belonged, was intimately related to the Bhojas who were like Vṛṣṇis, a sect of the Yādava clan. Some of the doctrines enunciaterd in the *Gītā* can be traced in the lessons received by Kṛṣṇa-Devakiputra from Ghora Āngirasa according to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.[12] Consequently it is believed that what he learnt from Ghora was what Kṛṣṇa also taught. His teaching was

8. It is treated in the *Kriyādhikāra* 11 : 99 to 107.
9. MBh. *Uddyoga* 70 : 3; ibid , *Śānti* 341 : 41.
10. *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 10. ff.
11. Ch. Up. 3. 17 : 6.
12. ibid., 3. 17 : 4, 6, 7. cf. Bh. G. 9 : 27, 16 : 1 to 3, 8 : 5 and 10; 4 : 1 f,

singularly successful, for he became the centre of a theistic movement, which in the course of time began to worship him along with his friend Arjuna.

In the *Mahābhārata*[13] the Supreme Spirit is addressed by Brahmā as Nārāyaṇa[14] and Viṣṇu[15] and is identified with Vāsudeva.[16] The purport seems to be that in a former age the Supreme Spirit Vāsudeva created Sankarṣaṇa, procreated his son Pradyumna and through him Aniruddha who himself is Viṣṇu and also created Brahmā in the former age and in the present occasion to request him again to be born in the Yadu race as Vāsudeva dividing himself into four parts as on the previous occasion. Thus Vāsudeva was the name of the teacher of the religion of *bhakti* and there appears to be an implication here that he existed with the other three in a previous age. In the *Anugītā* portion of the *Āśvamēdhika-parva*[17] an accidental meeting of Kṛṣṇa and a sage of the name Uttaṅka of Bhṛgu race takes place on the former's return from Dvārakā. The result of the war is given in detail by Kṛṣṇa to the sage. At the request of Uttaṅka Kṛṣṇa shows him His universal form. The form was the same as, or similar to, that which was shown to Arjuna according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*; but it is here called the Vaiṣṇava form which name does not occur in the *Gītā*. The identity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu is proved by this to have become an established fact. In the *Śāntiparva*[18] again, it is seen that Yudhiṣṭhira while addressing Kṛṣṇa identifies Him with Viṣṇu. In the epic period, Viṣṇu is regarded as the Supreme Spirit, but the names of Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa apparently occur in greater frequency and are more prominent.

The facts which are known from literary sources are supported by epigraphical evidences such as the Besnagar (old

13. MBh. *Bhiṣma* 65 : 54, 56.
14. ibid., ibid., 65 : 50.
15. ibid., ibid., 65 : 63.
16. ibid., ibid., 65 : 47, 69,
17. MBh. *Aśvamedhika*, ch. 53 to 55.
18. ibid., *Śānti*, ch. 43.

Gwalior state) inscription (180 B C)[19] and another inscription of the same place referring to the erection of Garuḍa column for the temple of the Bhagavat. The previous inscription is significant for the fact that Garuḍa, a bird sacred to Viṣṇu, is here associated with Vāsudeva and the inscription adds that "three immortal steps ..when practised lead to heaven...self-control, charity and diligence"[20] – which seem very much like an effort to moralise the three strides associated with Viṣṇu. At any rate, this inscription clearly shows that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was fully identified with Viṣṇu. A reference has come to notice recently in a Mathura inscription (first quarter of the first century) recording the erection of a gateway, a terrace and a *devakula* at the *mahāsthāna* of Vāsudeva proving worship of Vāsudeva in that locality.[21] Vāsudeva is not called Kṛṣṇa in the early Indian inscriptions; but the use of Kṛṣṇa, as another name of Vāsudeva, in works like the *Mahābhārata*, especially in the *Gītā* belonging to its early stratum, Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, and the *Ghaṭa Jātaka* is probably pre-Christian.[22] Again the Chinna (Kṛṣṇa District, Andhra) inscription[23] of Yajña-Śātakarṇī (last quarter of the second century) begins with an adoration to Vāsudeva alone and indicates the progress of Bhāgavatism in the South.

The identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu leads to the second current which flowed into the making of Vaiṣṇavism. Viṣṇu is a *Vedic* god and therefore He is much more ancient than Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. In the *Brāhmaṇas*[24] He is spoken of as the highest god and came to be considered by the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to be the same as their "God of gods" especially because of some winsome qualities in Viṣṇu's character, such as the quality of helpfulness which was extended to Indra and came to be treated as admitting

19. *Epigraphia Indica*. Vol. X. Inscription No. 669.
20. Dr. Barnett's translation, *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, p. 88.
21. *The Chltural Heritage of India*. Vol. IV, p. 116.
22. cf. Bhāg. P. 9. 9 : 49.
23. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 118.
24. cf. Ait. Br. 1, 1; Śat. Br. 14. 1:1.

extention to mankind. He is accordingly said to have thrice traversed the earthly spaces for man in distress[25] and in order to bestow it on man for a dwelling.[26] He is also spoken of a protector of embryos.[27] In the *Brahmaṇas*[28] he is said to have assumed the form of a dwarf in order to gain dominion over the earth for the gods. In the *Mahābhārata* numerous stories are told of Viṣṇu's acts of grace and helpfulness, his assuming various descents in order to aid gods and men in distress! It is not surprising therefore that this God of helpfulness was gradually appropriated by the followers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

In the period of Brāhmaṇas,[29] if not earlier, Viṣṇu was regarded by some as the Spirit of the Sun, and he has that characteristic in the *Gītā*.[30] When Viṣṇu was regarded as the Sun, it would be natural for the spiritual descendants of Ghora Āngirasa, a priest of the Sun, to worship him as their god. Consequently that Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult was a sect which grew up within Viṣṇu-Worship, and when it drifted its leader Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa identified him with the god whose worship he had preached. Again in the same period Viṣṇu was very definitely identified with the sacrifice,[31] thus again showing the close affinity between the Viṣṇu-cult and the Vāsudeva-cult. If they were two, it is not surprising, therefore, that before long they became one. In the *Anugītā* the identification of Vāsudeva[32] with Viṣṇu is complete, for the name most often used in the *Anugītā* for the Deity is Viṣṇu.

---

25. RV. 6. 49 : 13.
26. ibid., 7. 100 : 4; 6. 69 : 5 and 6.
27. ibid., 7. 36 : 9.
28. Śat. Br. 1. 2 : 5.
29. cf. the story about Āditya (sun) being Viṣṇu's head. Śat. Br. 14. 1 : 1 and 10. Viṣṇu is mentioned along with the Ādityas (Vide A.V. 11. 6 : 2) but never in the *Rg. Veda*.
30. Bh. G. 10 : 21; 11 : 30.
31. Śat. Br. 14. 1 : 1 and 1 ff; also 1. 2 : 5 and ff. cf. Bh. G. 8 : 4.
32. cf. MBh. *Bhīṣma* 65 : 47, 63, 69; and ibid., Āśva. 16 : 2 to 13.

The third element which contributed to the development of Vaiṣṇavism is the worship of Nārāyaṇa. The word '*narāyaṇa*' means 'the resting place or goal of *Nāra* or a collection of *Nāras*.[33] There is a tradition which connects Nārāyaṇa with primeval waters.[34] According to another tradition, Brahmā sprang from the lotus in the navel of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu.[35] There is a reference in the *Vāyu-purāṇa*[36] to Nārāyaṇa being represented as prior to matter in an undeveloped form (*avyakta*) and from this form sprang the mundane egg, from which arose Brahmā. All these traditions seem to have been based on the account to be found in the *Vedas*.[37] So Nārāyaṇa, is the resting place or goal to men and gods. He is therefore a different person prior to Brahmā and to the Svayambhu of Manu; he is not a historical or mythological individual. He is another person with cosmic character.

There is a reference in the Śatapatha *Brāhmana*[38] to a Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa who is stated to have thrice offered sacrifice at the instance of Prajāpati. Nārāyaṇa is, however, not identified here with Viṣṇu or any of the Ādityas. In another place of the same work[39] Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa is mentioned to have performed the *Pāñcarātra* sacrifice and attained a supreme position above all beings. The earliest evidence in favour of the identification of Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu is probably to be traced in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasutra* (fifth century B,C;).[40] The *Taittiriya-Āraṇyaka* contains a passage[41] in which Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are regarded as one and the same deity. Here Nārāyaṇa is also called Hari and 'the eternal Deity, the Supreme and Lord' and He is described

33. MBh. *Anuśāsana* 186: 7; *ibid.*, *Uddyoga* 69: 10.
34. *Manu*. 1. 10; cf. *Samūrtarcanādhikāra* 1: 7.
35. M.Bh, *Vana* 3. 12: 34 and ibid., *Śanti*. 349: 18.
36. Vay. P. 6. 78.
37. R.V. 10. 82: 5 and 6.
38. Sat. Br. 12. 3: 4.
59. ibid, 13: 6: 1.
40. B.D.S. 2. 9: 10.
41. Titt. Ār. 10: 11.

with all the attributes of the Supreme soul, which are usually found mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. Several passages of the *Mahābhārata* support the identification of Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa as found in the above passage.

In the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*, Nārāyaṇa figures as the Supreme God, especially in connection with creation. He is represented, mythologically, as lying on the body of a huge serpent in the ocean of milk. Here it is seen that the original conception of his connection with primeval waters is still being kept to Nārāyaṇa thus making Him a worshippable deity. The same epic describes the heaven of this Nārāyaṇa as the Śvetādvīpa or White Island.[42] Certain gods are said to have gone there and seen Hari in the abode made of great gems, lying on the serpent couch with Lakṣmī sitting at His feet and attended by the sage Nārada and other devotees.[43] It is also stated that *yogins* and *Kapilasāṃkhyas* who desire final deliverance (*mokṣa*) go to the White Island by reciting the prayer and praise composed by Bali. It is therefore evident that the island is the heavenly abode in which Nārāyaṇa, sometimes spoken of as Hari, dwells. The place corresponds in a way to the Vaikuṇṭha of Viṣṇu. It was to this place of Nārāyaṇa that Nārada went and learnt from Him the mono-theistic religion of Vāsudeva. There is, therefore, no need as Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar does to suppose that the White Island was a Christian country peopled by white races.[44]

In the epic period when the worship of Vāsudeva sprang, he was identified with Nārāyaṇa. In the *Vanaparva*[45] there is a description of the conditions of things at the time of dissolution of the universe wherein it is stated that there was water every where and there was a body lying on couch on a branch of a banyan tree. The boy opened his mouth

42. MBh. *Śānt*. ch. 335.

43. *Kathāsaritsāgara* 54: 25 to 27. The prayer which is offered by Naravāhanadatta mentions the six qualities of Viṣṇu. ibid., 54 : 31.

44. *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 45.

45. MBh. *Vana*. ch. 188, 189.

and swallowed Mārkaṇḍeya who roamed in the inside of his stomach and saw the whole universe and was struck with wonder. The boy then vomited him out, when he saw again the waters alone. When Mārkaṇḍeya questioned the boy about his identity he replied : "Formerly I gave to the waters the name of *Nāra*, and those were my resting place (*ayana*), and therefore I am Nārāyaṇa" and in this strain he goes on to describe his greatness. The whole story is told by Mārkaṇḍeya to Yudhiṣṭhira. It appears that the burden of the whole *Nārāyaṇiya* section is to establish this identity between Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva.

According to another tradition[46] there was another person, besides this Nārāyaṇa, who was always associated with Nara. They both went from the world of men to the world of Brahman and, being worshipped by the gods and the Gandharvas, existed only for the destruction of the demons. Indra was helped by Nara and Nārāyaṇa in his struggle with the *asuras*. The concept of companionship between Nara and Nārāyaṇa seems to be traceable to the Upaniṣadic idea of two birds dwelling in a tree, friends and associates of each other[47] That one of those who is called the lord and the onlooker is in the present tradition Nārāyaṇa and the other, who is engaged in eating the fruit of the tree, is Nara. The old idea was transferred to the new conception of Nārāyaṇa as the abode of all men. Again in the opening section of the *Nārāyaṇiya*, it is stated that Nārāyaṇa, the eternal and Universal Soul was born as the son of Dharma in the quadruple form of Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa.[48] The first two of these are stated to have practised austerities at Badarikāśrama in the Himālayas.[49] These four are represented as the sons of Dharma and had Ahiṃsā as their mother. This is perhaps to signify and support righteousness and non-slaughter of animals as against the old Ceremonial of sacrificial rities and Killing of animals. According to certain passages of the

46. *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 45.
47. Muṇ. Up. 3. 1 : 1; Sv. Up. 4 : 6. (Quoted from R.V. 1.164 : 20).
48. MBh. *Śānti* 333 : 16, 17.
49. ibid., 334. 8. cf. *Vām. P.* ch. 6.

Mahābhārata. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are called *ṛṣis*,[50] and this might have led to the conception of Nārāyaṇa as the *ṛṣi* or the composer of the *Puruṣa-sūkita*. These gods must have been very famous at the time when the epic was composed, since in the opening verse of its different parts obeisance is made to these two gods. Nara is identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.[51] And thus the old tradition about the two *ṛṣis* who were warriors at the same time was brought into a beautiful connection with the interlocators of the *Bhagavad-gītā* by the fertile imagination and genius of the poet.

While ideas connected with Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa thus mingled together to form the religion of the Vaiṣṇavites, there developed, before the beginning of the Christian era, an entirely new element which speaks of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, and dwells with great devotion on his birth, childhood, youth and sports and feats of great strength. There is no reference to this cowherd Kṛṣṇa in the authorities so far cited. In the *Harivaṃśa*[52] which is a supplement of *Mahābhārata* and in the *Purāṇas* such as *Vāyu-purāṇa*[53] and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*,[54] there are stories about Kṛṣṇa's tender babyhood and wanton childhood. When these works were written, the legend about the cowherd Kṛṣṇa must have already become current and his identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa been effected. It may be presumed that stories regarding the early life of pastoral Kṛṣṇa probably developed partly out of the *Vedic* legends about Viṣṇu, called '*gopa*'[55] in the *Rg-Veda* and '*govinda*' and '*dāmodara*' in the *Baudhāyaṇa Dharma-sūtra*[56]. But there are other factors which appear to have contributed to the development of the mythology of the cowherd Kṛṣṇa. The Yamunā region was possibly conspicuous

50. ibid., *vana*. 12. 46, 47; 30. 1; ibid., *Udyog*. 49 : 19.
51. ibid., Sabha. 66 : 11.
52. *Harivamsa* 2 : 20.
53. Vay. P. 98 : 100 to 102.
54. Bhag. P. 10 : ch. 29.
55. R.V. 1. 22 : 18; 10. 19 : 4.
56. B.D.S. 2.9 : 10.

for its cows as early as the age of *Rg-Veda* and a Vṛṣṇa (i.e., a member of the *Vṛṣṇi* clan) named Gobala (lit. 'one strong in the wealth of the cows') is known from the *Taittiriya Saṃhitā*[57] and *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*[58]. It is thus probable that the Yādava-Sāttvata-Vṛṣṇis of Mathurā possessed large herds of cattle as did their western neighbours, the Matsyas. Most of the stories about Kṛṣṇa's early life appear, however, to have been principally due to his identification with certain gods worshipped by Ābhīras and other allied peoples.

The *Mahābhārata* refers to Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd[59]. The *Gītā* contains the address of 'Govinda' to Kṛṣṇa[60] made by Arjuna Kṛṣṇa is referred to as Govinda as He found the earth (go) in the waters which He stirred.[61] But Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar says that the word '*govinda*' is a later form of '*govid*' which in the *Rg-Veda*[62] is used as an epithet of Indra in the sense of 'the finder of the cows'; this epithet as another one Keśiniṣūdana[63] which is also applicable to Indra, must have been transferred to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa when he came to be looked upon as the chief god. The word '*go*' in Sanskrit conveys more than one meaning.[64] Hence it is not improper to find the use of this word in some other sense as well.

Kālidāsa mentions Viṣṇu as appearing in the garb of cowherd (*gopa*).[65] The exact date of this poet is yet to be

---

57. Taitt. S. 3. 11. 9 : 3.
58. Jaim. Up. Br. 1. 6 : 1.
59. MBh. *Sabhā*, ch. 41.
60. Bh. G. 1 : 32; 2 : 9. Here the word may be taken as Madhusūdana (on 2 : 9), taken as one who knows the speech.
61. MBh. Ādi. 21: 22: 69 : 13. cf. ibid., *Śānti*. 342 : 70; 352 : 5; Mats. P. 248 : 43, 44.
62. R.V. 10. 103: 5 and 6 (Indra). cf. R.V. 9.55: 3 where this is addressed to Soma.
63. Bh. G. 18 : 1.
64. The word '*go*' has several meanings such as heaven, bull, ray, thunderbolt, cow, sight, arrow, direction, speech, earth and water. cf. *Nirukta*. 2: 6; 6 : 2; 6 : 20.
65. *Meghadūta* 1 : 15.

settled. However, among the Indian scholars, the view has been gaining ground in fixing him in the first century B.C., a date which would prove that identification of Kṛṣṇ with Viṣṇu was an admitted fact. Even a few centuries earlier to Kālidāsa, the epithets 'Viṣṇu', 'Nārayaṇa' and 'Vāsudeva' were used by Bhāsa[66] in his dramas *Dūtavākya*[67] and *Bālācarita*[68] who is no other than Viṣṇu in the garb of cowherd (gopāla).[69] Kṛṣṇa is identified with Vāmana also,[70] having the appellations Keśava, Hari, Bhagavān and Puruṣottama, all of which occur in the two dramas of Bhāsa cited above. Bhāsa refers to the Hallīśa dance in which Kṛṣṇa took part with the *gopīs*.[71] *Harivaṃśa*[72] refers to this dance without mentioning the name.[73] The *gopīs* sang and initiated the actions of Kṛṣṇa who is referred to as a boy of ten years old.[74] Kṛṣṇa is stated in the *Bhāgavata* to have taken part in the *rāsakrīdā* Himself taking as many bodies of Kṛṣṇa as there were *gopīs*.[75]

The foregoing pages show that long before the beginning of the Christian era, Kṛṣṇa was identified with Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. All these names came to denote Brahman represented by Viṣṇu with Śrī.[76] Viṣṇu possesses countless auspicious qualities and under the influence of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, six among these qualities were taken prominent note of as characterizing the Supreme Being. He

66. Bhāsa is referred to by Kālidāsa in the Prologue to his *Mālavikāgnimitra*.
67. *Bhāsanātakacakra*. pp. 441 to 458.
68. ibid., pp. 511 to 560.
69. ibid., p. 523.
70. ibid., p. 441.
71. vide: *Abhinavabhārati* on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Vol. I, p. 183.
72. *Harivaṃśa*. 2. ch. 20.
73. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha calls this as Hallīśa.
74. *Harivaṃsa* 2. 20: 18.
75. Bhāg. P. 10. ch. 33.
76. V.P. 1. 8: 17.

is the creator, preserver and destroyer. From Him arose Brahmā, the creator of the world. He descended down to the world to rescue His devotees from sufferings. Special actions of consecrations make God take His presence in idols and sālagrāmas in order that His devotees would be delighted by His presence.

The self owes its existence in the world to the will of God. It must realise its limitations and become aware of its abject dependence on His will which alone would save it from bondage. This requires the self to observe the rules of good conduct in order to please God. The self has to acquire the knowledge of its own nature and that of God. Duties which it has to discharge in accordance with the established rules of conduct are considered as *Karma-yoga* which includes the acts of service which it has to render to God.

Devotion is the best course which the self could adopt to win God's grace. The yogic practices of meditation could be adopted. Those who find this course difficult for adoption could simply surrender themselves together with their belongings to God. This does not imply a reference to the path of self-surrender which gets casual reference in these works. It is devotion to God that receives much attention as the means even for knowing the *tattva* and for doing one's duties. The self is asked to surrender to Him its relatedness to the fruits of the deeds done by it.

A devotee seeks to have personal experience of God. He is not in the least interested in the problems about the existence of God and the methods of approach to prove His existence. The experience that he gets is of mystical nature. It has full certitude and is ineffable. It is God that chooses the person to whom He reveals Himself. Study, intelligence and other attainments which the self could have to its credit are of no avail.[77] Mystic experience, being of the nature of ravishing emotional intensity and of vivid intellectual illumination[78] must be taken, when applied to Vaiṣṇavism, to have

77. Kaṭh Up. 2: 23.

78. *Types of Religious Philosophy*, p. 8.

been aroused by a clear awareness of God's possessing specific qualities and features which attract the selves to Him. These qualities create in the self astonishment which changes into admiration that becomes transformed into love. The self is won over by them to the side of God. Its self-abnegation is revealed in its denying everything for itself and its preparedness to lose individuality by surrendering unreservedly to God. 'Mysticism is the religion of feminine natures. Enthusiastic surrender, a delicate capacity for feeling, soft passiveness are its characteristics'.[79] This explains why the *nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva* or bridal mysticism represents an aspect of religious experience.

In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the word '*bhakti*' is interpreted in two ways. Primarily, it means doing service. Pāṇini[80] has two aphorisms, the first of which refers to doing service through devotion and the other implying mere attachment. Evidently, the latter is a reference to the attachment for the material objects. The word '*kāma*' which means love also admits of two-fold application. It connotes *viṣaya kāma* or hedonistic pleasure in psychology, *ātma kāma* or the desire for the self-realisation or *ātmā* spiritually and *Bhagavat kāma* or love of God in the religious sense or *śreyas*. The classical exposition of *kāma* in the *Upaniṣad* is given by saint Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī.[81] The bodily self or *dehātmā* has only perishable value, but *ātma* has intrinsic value; while lust is *viṣaya kāma*, love is divine or *Bhagavat kāma*, and the two are opposed as darkness and light, and there is no real middle term between the two. It is this *Bhagavat kāma*, that is emphasised in Sanskrit literature. Wherever *śṛṅgāra rasa* is portrayed, the joy of seeking the beauty of sex and revelling in love as in the *Śākuntala* is described and emphasised. It is more or less a way of preparation for the *Bhagavat kāma* or the divine love. The attainment of bliss and the removal of sorrow are thus ulti-

79. *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, p. 65.
80. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4. 3: 95, 96.
81. Br. Up. 4. 5: 6.

mate objective and aim. The author of the *Bhāgavata* refers to the *gopis* as having become rid of their inauspiciousness by the severe pangs of separation from the most dear person, that is, Kṛṣṇa.[82] The moment the *gopīs* got into the presence of Kṛṣṇa, they did not have then their physical frames which are made up of the qualities of matter,[83] that is, they were not then aware of their physical passion. They left off their children, husbands, parents-in-law and came to Kṛṣṇa. They admitted that their duty was to look after these persons, but they said that for all embodied beings, Kṛṣṇa is the most dear person, relation and self.[84] They declared that they were the servants of Him whose face was bewitching them,[85] the like of which they could never have occasion to visualize and which face was capable of conferring auspiciousness to the three worlds.[86]

Devotion to God has much significance when it is directed towards the Lord in *arcā* and in descents (*avatāras*). It is not as if other forms are left out, but in these two forms, the act of devotion is easily practised. In the case of divine descents, those of Varāha, Vāmana, Narasiṃha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have been arousing much more interest and attraction to the devotees. However, Kṛṣṇa alone seems to have been the object of bridal mysticism. Secondly, the sternness and majesty of Rāma did not arouse, in the minds of devotees, the longing which a woman feels for the company of her husband. The Lord's readiness to come to the side of His devotees who yearn for His vision and His preeminence demonstrated through incidents like measuring the entire universe, making Śiva holy by the latter's receiving the waters of Gaṅgā which sprung from His feet are frequently applauded.[87]

82. *Bhāg*. P. 10. 29 : 10.
83. ibid., 10. 29 : 11.
84. ibid., 10. 29 : 32.
85. ibid., 10. 29 : 39.
86. ibid., 10. 29 : 40.
87. ibid., 3. 28 : 21, 22.

The doctrine of the path of devotion and the practice of it by the devout persons have appreciably influenced the society and their principles have permeated into the core of the society resulting in the development of faith in God as an absolute feature of the life of the people. The thoughts and outlook have become saturated with the principles of Vaiṣṇavism. Any occurrence in the life of an individual or society came to be looked upon as designed by God for the welfare of the society. A true Vaiṣṇavite listens to the singing of God's names with rapturous attention and sings them without any delicacy. He laughs, sheds tears, sings and dances with joy.[88] Such people join together and participate in congregational prayers. They seek each other's company with avidity.[89] Devotion, experience of God and detachment from worldly affairs become the nourishment and food for them.[90] Whatever they do in the religious or secular aspect of their life, they offer it to God.[91] As a general principle, this is done mentally or to the *arcā* form of Viṣṇu. Neither the practice of penances nor the study of the *Vedas*, neither the acquirement of the sound knowledge of the *tattvas* nor the understanding of doing one's duty brings God near the self. Devotion is the surer mode for communion with God as it is evidenced in the case of *gopikās*.[92]

Making use of the sacred mud[93] and the red powder for the ornamental decoration on the fore-head and in the specified parts of the body have become part of the daily practices of the Vaiṣṇavites. This mark which is known as *ūrdhva-puṇḍra* on account of the vertical form which it takes is to resemble the feet of Viṣṇu,[94] thereby creating the chastening the feeling on the part of the wearer that he is decorated with the feet of God on his person. Others who wear such marks are

88. ibid., 11. 2: 39, 40.
89. *Sātt*. S. 21: 677.
90. *Bhāg*. P. 11. 2: 42.
91. ibid., 11. 2: 36.
92. Pad. P. 2. 2: 18.
93. *Parameś*. S. 3: 11.
94. Is. S. 21: 296 to 317; *Kriyādhikāra*, ch. 38; *Bhār*. S. 3: 66.

to be held in greater veneration. Any work, religious or secular, does not bear any result, if this mark is not worn by its performer.[95] Branding the upper portions of the arms with the heated Śaṅkha and Cakra came to be treated as the indispensable act which every Vaiṣṇavite has to undergo to qualify himself for recognition of having become a Vaiṣṇavite.[96] No Vaiṣṇavite shall take anything, food or drink, without offering it to the deity.[97] A devotee, or as a matter of fact, any Vaiṣṇavite, shall undertake his personal worship of the deity in the form of sālag āma.[98] Constant utterance of the names of Viṣṇu is enjoined for practice[99] and the enumeration of the thousand names of Viṣṇu,[100] in a way, enables the person to set apart a particular part of the day, preferably the morning or evening, for this purpose and attend at other times to his usual routine work. *Aṣṭākṣara* is the holiest of *mantras* which a devout Vaiṣṇavite shall meditate upon everyday.[101] The water, which becomes sacred, by washing the feet of the image of Viṣṇu, as also those of the devotees, and with which the sālagrāma[102] is worshipped, is very holy and a devotee shall take this and purify himself. Sprinkling with this water over the head also leads to the removal of sins.[103] The flowers used for God's worship are sacred and are received by the devotees after the worship is over.[104]

The region, which a devotee of Viṣṇu, aspires to go to, is described to be distinct from the material world. It is a place which provides the devotees with unalloyed bliss, where is present every factor which is conducive to the arousing of enlightenment and delectable enjoyment of God-

---

95. *Pārameś*. S. 3: 20, 21.
96. *Bhār*. S. 3: 60.
97. *Sātt*, S. ch. 7.
98. *Pārames*. S. 11 : 359, 364, 365.
99. *Bhāg*. P. 11. 2: 39.
100. MBh. *Anuśāsana*, 254.
101. *Nāradīya Smṛti*, 1 : 32.
102. cf. Gar. P. 45 : 1 and 33.
103. *Smrtimuktāphala*. *Āṇika kāṇḍa* part II, pp. 389-91.
104. *Bhag*. P. 11. 3 : 54.

realization in the concourse of fellow-devotees who had reached that region through devotion to Viṣṇu. It is a place from which there is no return for the released self to this mortal mundane world.[105] Though there are possibilities for the selves to be near God (*samīpya)*, to have a form similar to His *(sārūpya)*, to have similarity to Him *(sādṛśya)*, the devotee shall yearn to have communion *(sāyujya)*.[106] It is called *Paramapada*,[107] a shining spiritual world, a noumenal realm, which can neither be perceived by the senses nor conceived by the spatialising intellect. Its supreme beauty cannot be adequately portrayed by the divine faculty of the poet, the painter or the musician, but can be intuited and described only by the blissfull *mukta.*

105. *Ahir*. S. 37: 26. cf. V.P. 1. 6: 40.

106. *Bhāg*. P. 3. 29: 13; cf. *Jitantā* 36.

107. R.V, 1. 154: 5,6; *Bhāg*, P. 11. 20: 37: *Ahi*. S. 37; 26.

A PREFATORY STUDY OF THE NĀLĀYIRAM

SUMMARY

In the section under reference, a study of the age of the Āḷvārs, of the numerology of the *Nālāyiram*, and a general summary of each of the works of the Āḷvārs are attempted.

The age of the Āḷvārs is shrouded in mystery. Literary evidences such as *Guruparamparās*, *Divya-sūricaritam*, annecdotes recorded in later works, glimpses of society depicted in their poems and the linguistic evidences to some extent are examined. Reliance is placed on the names of years in the sixty-year cycle to arrive at the dates of their birth to a fair degree of accuracy leaving aside the dates relating to the *yuga* calculation as out of consideration. The limits of the dates of the Āḷvārs are fixed C 700 and 850 A.D.

The number of verses in the *Divya Prabandham* and their pattern of arrangement have been detailed here and the problem of the exact number 4000 with reference to *Prabandha-cāram* of Vedānta Deśika, the number of *Prabandhams* in the collection and the needless controversy over the possible order of poems of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, the question of claiming

'*Tiruppallāṇṭu*' of Periyāḷvār as a separate work, the dissection of the two *Maṭals* into a number of small slices and naming them as 'verses' to suit convenience, the inclusion of Amutaṉār's poem in the anthology - are all discussed.

A summary regarding the purport of the twenty-four *Prabandhams* in the *Nālāyiram* collection is given to enable a fuller comprehension of the religion and philosophy of the Āḷvārs.

THE AGE OF THE ĀḶVĀRS

The Age of the Āḷvārs is shrouded in mystery. In an age in which historical sense is keenly alive, there is obviously no place for the chronology fabricated by tradition. The fabulous claims, which tradition makes on behalf of the Āḷvārs as belonging to the ages far in advance of the dates which are historically valid, have been upheld only by the incurably credulous. Though the age of the Āḷvārs has recently received considerable attention at the hands of the historians, no unbiased attempt seems to have been made to arrive at the exact dates of these Āḷvārs from the sources available so far. Here is undertaken a brief consideration of their ages from the historical point of view leaving aside the miraculous incidents associated with their birth and life.

According to the *Guruparamparās*, some of the Āḷvārs were born in the *Dvāpara-yuga* and others in the *Kaliyuga*.[1] Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār is said to have lived for 4700 years.[2] While dealing with the lives of the Āḷvārs and mentioning their names, together with the stars in which they were born, their compositions and the number of verses in their compositions, no particular order is found adopted by the different writers.[3] It is also not clear whether these authors had any serious intention to mention the names of the Āḷvārs in the order of their birth. At first sight, it appears as though it was intended to maintain this order. Really speaking, with the exception of one writer,[4] others had no

---

1. Poykaiyār, Pūtattār, Pēyār, Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār and Maturakavi Āḷvār are stated to have been born in the *Dvāpāra - yuga*, while others in the *Kaliyuga*.
2. G.P. p. 23.
3. Vide: Appendix II.
4. U.P.R. v. 6 to 26.

intention to conform to this order. Curiously enough, there is more unanimity in the *Divyasūricarita*, *Guruparamparā* and *Prabandha-cāra* of Vedanta Deśika in following a particular order. There is of course a reference in one[5] of the *Guruparamparās* to maintain an order in the treatment which is different from the one relating to the birth of Āḻvārs. It is, however, doubtful whether this deserves acceptance. Besides, the *Guruparamparās* and the life-accounts which are published in the printed texts of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, mention the dates according to the *yuga* calculation and the years by their names which are included in the sixty year cycle beginning with *Prabhava*. Historically proved data that are available on the age of the Āḻvārs militate against the admission of these dates for the Āḻvārs. However, the names of the years are helpful in arriving at the dates of the birth of the Āḻvārs to a fair degree of accuracy, of course, leaving aside, out of consideration, the dates relating to the *yuga* calculation. A different order is therefore to be adopted for the treatment of the age of the Āḻvārs.

THE FIRST ĀḺVĀRS

The first three Āḻvārs, Poykaiyār, Pūtattār and Pēyār, were not born in the ordinary way, but miraculously[6] in Kāñcī, Tirukkaṭalmallai and Tirumayilai respectively. All the three Āḻvārs were contemporaries since they were traditionally said to have met for the first time at Tirukkōyilūr[7]

5. G.P. p. 23.

6. They are said to have born of flowers: Poykaiyār of golden-lotus, in the tank near the Yathōktakāri temple at Kāñcī, Pūtattār of the Mātavi flower and Pēyār of red-lotus (G.P. pp. 7, 8). cf. D.S.C. II: 12, where Pūtattāḻvār is stated to have sprung out of blue lily; ibid II: 13 where Pēyāḻvār is said to have come out of a pond of lilies.

7. M.Tv. 86. A beautiful legend tell sus how these saints sought shelter on a dark night from the down-pour of heavy rain in a narrow enclave which could just contain them standing, when Viṣṇu Himself sought their company as the fourth; they felt the pressure due to the presence of the new companion, and recognizing His identity, they praised Him in song then and there.

and afterwards at Tirumalicai[8] near Madras to enjoy the companionship of Tirumalicaiyāḷvār. Perhaps Pēyāḷvār was a younger contemporary of the other two Āḷvārs. But for the one incident of the meeting of the three saints, the *Gruparampara* gives no particulars regarding them. The devotion of these early saints is gentle, simple devotion, altogether free from an intolerant sectarian outlook. This fact together with their use of *Veṇpā* metre only in their devotional hymns points to a really early date for them—earlier than all the other Āḷvārs.

The question of the age of these Āḷvārs is involved in hopeless obscurity. Poykaiyār and Pēyār refer to a Viṇṇakaram (from the Sanskrit word (*viṣṇugṛham*) in their respective *Antātis*.[9] This Viṇṇakaram is identified by some with the Paramēśvara-Viṇṇakaram (Vaikunta Perumāḷ temple at Kāñci)[10] and by others with the Nantipura-Viṇṇakaram (Nāthankōil).[11] In the latter case, the word '*nanti*' is taken to refer to Nantivarman I who, it is said, was a devotee of Viṣṇu. Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai refuses to accept both the identifications, the reason for the former being that Paramēśvara-Viṇṇakaram was built by Nantivarmaṉ II (A.D. 731-796) so called by his personal name which was Paramēśvaraṉ. The contention of the learned Professor's non-acceptance of the latter is that nothing is known about Nantivarmaṉ except that he was the father of Siṃhaviṣṇu and the Pallava line itself was known as Siṃhaviṣṇu line. Moreover, Nantipura-Viṇṇakaram, the modern Nāthankōil, is in the Cōḷa country near Kumbakonam; and it was Siṃhaviṣṇu who brought the region watered by the Kāviri for the first time under the Pallavas.

The one fact, according to Prof. Pillai, which indisputably settles the question of the date of these Āḷvārs is a reference by Pūtattāḷvār to Māmallai[12] which is none other

8. D.S.C. III: 8; G.P. p. 17.
9. M.Tv. 77; Mū. Tv. 61, 62. I. Tv does not make a reference to this.
10. *Tamil Studies*, p. 301.
11. *Āḷvārkaḷ Kālanilai*, pp. 40, 41.
12. I. Tv. 70.

than the modern Mahābalipuram. Its original name was Mahāmallapuram.[13] The word *'viṇṇākar'* occurring before the word *'tiruvehkā'* in the verse of Poykaiyāḷvār and Pēyāḷvār referred to above suggests the proximity of Viṇṇakaram to Tiruvehkā in Kāñci. That this Viṇṇakaram could have been built by Paramēśvaravarmaṇ I[14] (A.D. 670-680) is evident from the frequent association of the words *'pallavarkōṇ'*, *'kacci'* and Paramēśvara-Viṇṇakaram in Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's poem.[15] The traditional year[16] in which the three Āḷvārs were born was *Siddhārthi* which could be taken to correspond to A.D. 719 and not to an earlier date. This receives support from the reference in the composition of these Āḷvārs, to Viṇṇakaram which was built about A.D. 680. Even the tradition says that this Āḷvār was born at Kaṭalmallai which is the same as Mahābalipuram. Now Mahāmalla was the famous Naraśimhavarmaṇ I (A D. 630-668) who for his military prowess was known with this title. So Pūtattāḷvār could have lived only after A.D. 650. But on the basis of joint authorship of a verse[17] one can conclude that Kāraikkāl Pēyār and Pēyāḷvār were contemporaries and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār would need to be placed about A.D. 700[18]. Poykaiyār and Pūtattār belonged to the same period. So these three Āḷvārs must have lived in about the beginning of the first quarter of the eighth century.

---

13. This was founded by Narasimhavarmaṇ I Mahāmalla. Vide *History of Ancient India*, pp, 448, 449.

14. *History of India, Part I Ancient of India*, p. 300 (2nd Edition, 1953).

15. Peri. Tm. 2. 9.

16. P.T.A. p. 2.

17. *Yāparuṁkala Vṛtti*, 93, pp. 350-352. The verse referred to here begins with *"Karaippār peru"*.

18. Two verses beginning with "Vañci veliya" and "Karaippar peru" are ascribed to Karaikkal Ammaiyar and Avvaiyar jointly by Naccinārkkiṉiyar (Tol. *ceyyul* Nac. p. 66). Contrary to this, the former verse is ascribed to Poykaiyar exclusively (Yap. Comm. p. 350) and the latter to Pūtattār and Kārakkāl Pēyār jointly (ibid., 352) by the commentator on *Yāpparuṇkalam*. Kāraikkāl Pēyār may be assigned to A.D. 700. *(History of Tamil Language and Literature*, pp. 107, 108).

TIRUMAḶICAI ĀḶVĀR

Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār, otherwise known as Bhaktisāra, is mentioned next in the list.[19] Born as the son of Bhārgava *ṛṣi at* Tirumaḷicai, also called Mahīsāra,[20] and thrown away by his parents[21] on the wayside, the baby was picked up by Tiruvāḷaṉ,[22] who having been childless, was very glad to bring up the foundling as his own child. It was fed upon the milk supplied *gratis* by a pious cowherd. Soon a child was born to the cowherd also. This child was named Kaṇikaṇṇaṉ, and he subsequently became a disciple to Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār.

As the boy Tirumaḷicai grew in years, he learnt that it was necessary to examine critically the various systems of philosophy that were then in currency, and after the requisite preparation, he searched for truth in the heterodox systems of Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvaka philosophy. It is said that the Āḷvār spent a period of seven hundred years in meditation occupying a cave in a forest near Tirumaḷicai.[23] He examined the six orthodox systems and also that of a *Kudṛṣṭi* which must refer to that of Advaita.[24] The Śaiva schools of religion were examined.[25] It was at Tirumaḷicai that he met the first three Āḷvārs and gained their friendshsp.[26] In their company he paid a visit to Mayilai the birth place of Pēyāḷvār. He

19. G.P., p.10; T.P. 371; D.S.C. II : 23.
20. G.P., p. 11.
21. Sage Bhārgava and a celestial nymph were the parents (D.S.C. II: 28-35).
22. G.P. p. 12.
23. D.S.C II: 54. G.P. (p.15) mentions that he spent this period at Tiruvallikēṇi where he established his greatness by conquering Śiva who on that occasion bestowed upon him the title 'Bhaktisāra'.
24. ibid., II: 58.
25. ibid., II: 60.
26. D.S.C. does not state that all the first three Āḷvārs met Bhaktisāra and not certainly at Tiruvallikāṇi (III: 8). Poykaiyaḷvār alone met him and both then went to Tiruvallikēṇi (III: 13). Both sat there under the Kesara tree on the bank of the tank of lilies and enjoyed meditation (III: 14). Bhaktisāra learnt yogic practices from Poykaiyāḷvār (III: 15).

then proceeded to Kāñcipuram with Kaṇikaṇṇaṉ whom he took with him from his native village.

There is a story of the Āḷvār turning an old prostitute into a young damsel whom the local king married infatuated by her beauty.[27] But her beauty was waxing day by day while the king's was waning. Knowing from his wife the cause for this strange phenomenon and the Āḷvār's spiritual greatness, the king sent word to the disciple of the Āḷvār, Kaṇikaṇṇaṉ, and wanted him to bring the Āḷvār to his presence. The disciple expressed his inability to do so. At this, the king asked him to sing in praise of himself. This was refused by the disciple because mortal lips were given only to praise God, and none else. Enraged at the reply, the king ordered him to leave the capital. The disciple did so followed by his *guru*, the Āḷvār, and it is said that the deity in the temple also followed them. At this, all the other gods and townsmen left, and the whole city of Kāñcī had wholesale evacuation. The king got alarmed at this and ran up to the Āḷvār and requested him to forgive him for the offence, and the Āḷvār granted him pardon. After a short stay at Kāñcī the Āḷvār went to Kumbakonam where he spent the rest of his life. This, in brief, is the traditional version of the Āḷvār's life-history.

As regards the date of this Āḷvār, there is no internal evidence in his writings to proceed upon with any degree of certainty. He was born in the year *Siddhārthi* which corresponds to A.D. 720[28]. He was a contemporary of the first three Āḷvārs who were also born in the same year *Siddhārthi*. Much significance need not be attached to the period of seven hundred years which he is said to have spent in meditation after which he met the three Āḷvārs. That he learnt from Poykaiyāḷvār the various methods of meditation need not show him to have been younger to Poykaiyāḷvār. This date of birth as A.D. 720 for this Āḷvār becomes acceptable, as he could have made Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (A.D. 731–

27. G.P., p. 19. This took place when the Āḷvār was staying in the Yathōktakāri temple at Kāñcī.

28. P.T.A., p. 3; A.G.P. fol. 7 (b).

794)[29] turn a Vaiṣṇavite through his pupil Kaṇikaṇṇaṉ. But from their general tenor of his poems, it might be inferred that he should have lived at a period when the Jains, Buddhists and Saivites were struggling for religious supremacy. This Āḻvār may be regarded as the Vaiṣṇavite counterpart of Tirumūlar though there is little in common between the Āḻvār's views against Śaivism and the unconventional cosmopolitan and at times even iconoclastic negativism of Tirumūlar. The story that Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār met the first three Āḻvārs at Tiruvallikkēṇi may indicate that his real date was the same as that of Tirumūlar whose date is fixed in the first quarter of the eighth century.[30] The miracle of the rejuvenation by Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār of the old prostitute with whom the Pallava king[31] fell in love after her youth was restored is aprocryphal. He introduced the use of the sacred mud as the Vaiṣṇavite creed mark and this is perhaps commemorated in the story that he discovered the place in Tiruvallikkēṇi where the earth for that mark was available.[32] He mentions the shrines of Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Śrīraṅgam and many smaller ones including one at Tiruvallikkēṇi where a record in the twelfth year of Dantivarmaṉ Pallava (A.D. 795-845)[33] is found. His verses are reminiscent of *Ācārak-kōvai* and other works. His date may not be later than the eighth century.

There are expressions in his work such as '*potu-pokku*' (Nāṉ. Tv. 32), '*vālaṭṭum*' (ibid 38), '*uṟukiṉṟèn*' (ibid 42) which are found used in works belonging to a subsequent period.[34] Such linguistic evidences point to an age; but they are in no way helpful in determining the date of the composition.

---

29. *History of India, Part 1: Ancient India*, p. 300.
30. *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, p. 108.
31. G.P., p. 18.
32. D.S.C., III: 16, 17, 18.
33. *History of India, Part I Ancient India*, p. 300.
34. *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, p. 121 (foot note)

TONTARAṬIP-POTIYĀḶVĀR

The story of this Āḷvār whose earlier name was Vipranārāyaṇa is the story of a sinner turned into saint like Bilvamaṅgala of Kerala[35] and Vemana of Andhra desa.[36] He was born in a village called Maṇṭaṅkuṭi in Thañjāvūr District in an orthodox Soḷiya brahmin family. After the study of the *Vedas* and the *Śāstras*, he took to the quiet and unostentatious occupation of cultivating a flower garden and dedicating the flowers to the Sleeping Beauty of Śrīraṅgam.[37] He was going on with this work undisturbed, when one day he came across a dancing girl of winning manners and equally tempting features. She was returning with her sister from the court of the Cōḷa King at Uṛaiyūr. On their way home, this woman made a wager to her sister saying that she would win every one by the charm of her beauty, among whom this austere Vaiṣṇavite saint was no exception. With this view in mind, she began to serve him in the improvement of his garden and in course of time she managed to entice him away from his devotion. Before the end of a year, poor Vipranārāyaṇa had degraded himself having lost all his claims to reverence. All day long his thoughts were set on her and before long he forgot his flower garden. Month after month passed and Vipranārāyaṇa became totally a different person.[38] He turned penniless and in consequence was abandoned by his 'sweet-heart'.

God would never desert His devotees. Śrī Raṅganātha taking pity on the wretched condition of His devotee undertook to reclaim him.[39] He assumed one day the form of a temple servant and carried a golden bowl belonging to the temple to Vipranārāyaṇa's concubine, presented it to her stating that it was from her lover Vipranārāyaṇa and that his errand was to communicate to her his desire to meet her that

35. *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 31-34.
36. *Śataka Vāṅmaya Sarvaswamu*, pp. 134-156.
37. T.M. 45; T.E. 10. In this respect he resembles Periyāḷvār and Mālākāra of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*
38. T.M. 25, 31, 33, 34.
39. ibid., 10.

night. Both met that night and spent a very happy time. Next morning the loss of the golden bowl was brought to the notice of the temple authorities, and on vigorous search it was detected in the house of Vipranārāyaṇa's concubine. Of course Vipranārāyaṇa was given to understand that Śrī Raṅganātha was the source of correction. He regained his senses and became an Āḷvār and thenceforward he remained faithful to his Lord. He continued his *kaiṅkarya* as before to the Lord. He expiated his sins by purificatory deeds such as drinking of water washed of the feet of the devotees of the Lord.[40]

The Āḷvār's work, *Tirumālai* not only gives some autobiographical incidents of his life, but also some valuable evidence regarding his date. The Āḷvār refers to two Purāṇic stories in his work[41] and one of them about Mudgala is traced to *Viṣṇudharmōttara-purāṇa*[42] by an ancient commentator. The other story about Kṣatra-bandhu has been traced by Sri T.A. Gopinatha Rao to the seventeenth chapter of the same *Purāna*.[43] This *Purāṇa* is one of the *upapurāṇas* and its date is sometime between 628 and 1000, A.D. as it extracts *Paitamahāsiddhānta* from the *Brahma-sphuṭa-siddhānta* written by Brahmagupta in 628 A.D. which Alberuni (1030 A.D.) studied later very minutely. This fact is helpful in assigning the Āḷvār to a period in the eighth century which is admissible from the evidence of his birth in the year *Prabhava* which corresponds to 727 A.D.[44] and he is said to have lived for 105 years.[45]

The Āḷvār also uses '*ōlakkam*'[46] '*paṭyal*'[47] and '*pōlkkan*'[48] which are later day words not found even in the

40. G.P., pp. 40-41; D.S.C. VI : 76, 77.
41. T.M., 4, 12.
42. Chap. 90.
43. *History of Sri Vaiṣṇavas* p. 20; cf. Winternitz: H.I.L. I, p. 580.
44. P.T.A., p. 6.
45. A.G.P., for. 10 (b).
46. T.E., 9.
47. T.M., 37.
48. ibid., 33.

Tivākaram, Piṅkalantai and *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu.* His word '*kaṇṇaṟā*'[49] is hardly grammatical. The recitation of *Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucci* in the Śrīraṅgam temple is provided in a record of 1085 A.D. The construction of the fourth wall of the Sriraṅgam temple by Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār in such a way as it should be slightly out of its proper alignment without disturbing Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi's flower garden and the latter's personal word of thankfulness to the former,[50] and the identity of the last two lines of one verse in *Tirumālai* and of one verse in *Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam*[51] lead us to conclude that the date of this Āḻvār must be prior to that of Tirumaṅkai-yāḻvār.

KULACĒKARA ĀḺVĀR

The next Āḻvār is Kulacēkara Āḻvār who styles himself as Kollikāvalan (the king of Kolli), Kūṭal-nāyakaṉ (the Lord of Maturai) and Kolikkōṉ (the Lord of Uṟaiyūr).[52] These names indicate that he who was a prince had sway over the Kerala, Pāṇṭiya and Cōḻa kingdoms. He was born in Tiruvañcikkūḷam on the Malabar coast as a prince of Kēraḷa.[53] Remarkable in his devotion to Viṣṇu, he, in course of time, abdicated his throne in favour of his son and retired to Śrīraṅgam where he is said to have engaged himself in the construction of portions of the temple of Raṅganātha.[54]

In one of his verses,[55] the Āḻvār uses the expression '*toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi*' which was most probably adopted by Vipranārāyaṇa as his surname. He is said to have been born in the twenty-eighth *Kali Parābhava* year. Leaving aside this *kali* age, if reliance is placed on the year *Parābhava*, Kulacē-

49. ibid., 44.
50. G.P., p. 53.
51. T.M. 17; T.K. 13.
52. Perum, Tm. 2: 10, vide: *The Contributions of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, p. 2.
53. T.P. 374.
54. *Kōyil Oḻuku.* cf. *Āḻvārkaḷ Kālanilai*, p. 176.
55. Perum. Tm. 2: 2.

kara's year of birth could be 767 A.D.[56] He is said to have composed a lyric called *Mukundamālā*.[57] He had a daughter who was much attracted to Śrī Raṅganātha. He gave her in marriage to the Lord.[58] So he could be placed in the eighth century. He was a Cēra king, most probably of the *koṅku-cēra* line. He has not even referred to any of the sacred shrines in the Cēra country. There is nothing to betray his nationality except the word '*accan*' which occurs in one of his hymns.[59] The Āḷvār had sung about Tiruvēṅkaṭam,[60] Tiruvaraṅkam,[61] Tirukkaṇṇapuram,[62] Ālinakar,[63] Tillaic-citrakūṭam[64] – in the Cōḷa country. There is reference to Mallaimānakar; but Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai, the commentator, gives a different interpretation altogether. Neither Tillaicci-trakūṭam nor the Lord Govindarāja is mentioned by Cuntaramūtti nāyaṉār and probably the date of this temple is 750 A.D.[65] This confirms the date that has been already reached. He has sung one decad on the Lord of Vittuvakkōṭu which is identified as a former suburb of Vañci–karuvūr by Prof. M. Raghava Iyengar,[66] and this may be accepted. The Āḷvār shows his knowledge of Kuṟaḷ[67]. His hymn on 'Tettaruntiral'[68] was recited at Śrīraṅgam according to an inscription of 1085 A.D.[69]

---

56. *The Contributions of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, p. 2.*
57. ibid., pp. 3-5, G.P., p. 27.
58. D.S.C. V: 25.
59. Perum Tnr. 2: 9.
60. ibid., 4.
61. ibid., 1, 2, 3; 8 : 10.
62. ibid., 8.
63. ibid., 8 : 7.
64. ibid., 10.
65. His period has been fixed as the beginning of the eighth century A.D. by Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (*History of Tamil Language and Literature*, p. 110).
66. *Āḷvārkaḷ Kālanilai* pp. 167, 168. The word '*Vittuvakkōṭu*' means 'a place of habitation by Vidvans'; '*Koṭu*' means 'water-bank' (vide *Kuṟal* 553 and its commentary).
67. Perum. Tm. 5: 3, cf. Kuṟaḷ, 542
68. ibid., 2.
69. *Cōḷas* II, p. 479.

TIRUPPĀṆĀḶVĀR

Tiruppāṇāḷvār, like Tirunīlakaṇṭayāḷppāṇar of the Śaiva hagiology, was a musician of low caste, but, in addition, he was a poet. He was a native of Uṛaiyūr near Tirucci-rāppaḷḷi. His low birth deprived him of the privilege of entering the holy precincts of the Lord of Śrīraṅgam. So he had to sing the praises of Śrī Raṅganātha from the southern bank of the Kāviri. He was a saint of a highly devotional temperament, justly honoured by God, who ordered, it is said, one Lōkaśaraṅgamuni to carry the Āḷvār to the temple on his shoulders (hence known as Munivāhana), where he after contemplation vanished into divinity.[70] He has left only one poem *'Amalaṉātipirāṉ'* consisting of ten verses. The poem must have been set to music, though its tune is not given anywhere. The exquisite simplicity of the poem and the deep emotion it evokes makes it an outstanding composition among the hymns of the Vaiṣṇavite saints. Although the ancient musical systems of the Tamils have completely disappeared, its specimen is appreciated through the melody of his composition.

He is stated to have taken his birth in the year *Durmati*[71] which corresponds to 781 A.D. and to have lived for seventy five years.[72] *'utara pantam'*,[73] and *'vāram'*[74] are the two words of a later period used by him in his poem.[75] Since this linguistic evidence is not helpful and since no other evidence is available the oniy period that is admissible for this Āḷvār is the eighth century.

Apart from the *Guruparamparā* and other traditional sources, there is no direct evidence to place this Āḷvār immediately after Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi who was born in *Kali* 298th

---

70. G.P., p 46.
71. P.T.A., p. 7.
72. G.P., p. 42.
73. A.P., 4.
74. ibid., 5.
75. *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, p; 120.

year. Tiruppāṇāḷvār was born in Kali 343rd year. Leaving *Kali* era out of consideration, Tiruppāṇāḷvār must have born forty-five years after Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi, that is, in 772 A.D., but Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi was born in *Parābhava* (727 A.D.) and Tiruppāṇāḷvār in *Durmati* (781 A.D.).[76] This is after fifty-four years which could not be reconciled with the difference of forty-five years noted above. There is no harm in admitting 781 A.D. as the date of this Āḷvār, as there is no evidence to contradict this date and as this is in consonance with the traditional account given in the sources. He must, however, be placed only after Kulacēkarāḷvār.

TIRUMAṄKAIYĀḶVĀR

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār is believed to have been born of *Kalla* caste and to have led a life of brigandage. He was a native of Tirukkuraiyalūr near Cīkāḷi in the Thañjāvūr District. His parents named him Kaliyaṉ. It appears that he held the office of the generalissimo under the Cōḷa king and that he was the feudal chieftain of a small principality or a group of villages called Āli Nāṭu in the eastern part of the Cōḷa country. His headquarters appear to have been Tirumaṅkai, and from the way in which he speaks of this place[77] it must have been an important town in his days, though it could not be identified with any of the existing villages in the Cīkāḷi taluk. He developed into a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa through his wife Kumudavalli who was the daughter of a Vaiṣṇavite doctor. The pious lady married him on condition that he should become an ardent Vaiṣṇavite in thought, word and deed and that he should feed 1008 Vaiṣṇavite devotees every day for one year. By her initiation and preaching, Kaliyaṉ became a staunch worshipper of Viṣṇu.

Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ seems to be the most learned of all the Vaiṣṇavite saints. His contributions to the *Nālāyiram* amount to 1361 verses and consist of six separate poems which

---

76. P.T.A., p. 7.

77. Peri. Tm. 1. 9: 10; 2. 1: 10; 2. 3: 10; 2. 7: 10; 2. 8: 10 etc. (the last verses of his hymns).

form, it is stated, the logical supplement to the four poems of Nammāḷvār. In fact, the works of Nammāḷvār are conventionally regarded as the four *Vedas*, while those of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār as the six *Vedāṅgas*.[78] Even in his own life time he should have been admitted as a famous poet,[79] a successful controversialist[80] and a great donor of charities. It is chronicled that at a poetical contest he was conferred the title of 'Nāṟkavip-perumāḷ (the Master of the four kinds of poetry).[81] The compositions of this Āḷvār are said to be of four kinds, namely, Ācu, Matura, Citra and Viśtāra.[82]

In his later days he resigned his office, perhaps on account of some misunderstanding between him and the Cōḷa king,[83] and set out on a pilgrimage from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Being a man of considerable wealth and influence Kaliyaṉ visited eighty-six shrines out of 108 temples and sang hymns in praise of the deities. The Āḷvār spent large sums in building the fourth rampart wall in the Śrīraṅgam temple which has been known to this day as 'Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ Tirumatil' (the sacred wall of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār). To secure funds for this sacred work, he is said to have demolished a golden image of Buddha at Nākappaṭṭiṉam which was in his days a deserted seat of Buddhism.[84] It is stated that he even resorted to highway robbery in order to

78. G.P., p 52.; U.R.M. 9.

79. Peri. Tm. 1. 7: 10. In this verse, the Āḷvār himself refers as 'Iruntamiḷ nūṟpulavaṉ'.

80. It is mentioned that he worsted Tirujñāṉa Campantar in a poetical contest. (G.P., p. 52). This is not acceptable as Tirujñāṉa Campantar flourished in the seventh century. vide *History of Ancient India*, p. 483.

81. Kūrattāḷvāṉ's commendatory verse (Taṉiyaṉ) praises this Āḷvār's poems as suitable literature for the five branches of Tamil Grammar thereby signifying to the excellence of this Āḷvār's works.

82. G.P., p. 52.

83. It is stated that he had misappropriated the revenue of the villages he had the tenure of, and so the king imprisoned him. He got his release by paying off the amount through the assistance of God Aruḷāḷaperumāḷ of Kāñcī (G.P., p. 49) and began a new walk of life - that of a highway robber.

84 G.P. p. 53.

carry out his holy mission and charities. The D.S.C. says that he robbed of Śrī Raṅganātha and Sri Āṇṭāḷ when they were returning to Śrī Villipputtūr.[85]

Though born at Tirukkuṟaiyalūr of Āli Nāṭu, the Āḷvār spent his last days at Tirukkuruṅkuṭi in the Tirunelveli District. He is referred to by several names, namely, Kali-kaṉri, Kaliyaṉ, Parakālaṉ, Aruḷmāri, Araṭṭamukki etc.[86] These titles perhaps indicate his real profession. He must have lived in stirring times, chosen a military career and won high distinctions in it.

The Āḷvār, unlike several of the Tamil poets, has left clear evidence of the time when he flourished. We have ample references to the Pallava and the Cōḷa kings and the political events of their times. He has sung about Paramēś-vara Viṇṇakaram [87] at Kāñci which was built by Paramēśvara-varmaṉ I (670-680 A .D.)[88]. It is also possible to suggest that this temple Viṇṇakaram was well known during the period of the first three Āḷvārs and that it became reputed as Paramēś-vara Viṇṇakaram after Nandivarmaṉ II (731-796A.D) [89] built or rebuilt it. From the references which the Āḷvār makes to this temple, it is clear that both the temple and the deity were respected and worshipped by the king of Mallas (Mallai-yarkōṉ).[90] This king must have been no other than Mahā-malla, the title by which the Pallava king Naraśimhavarman I (630-668 A.D.) was known.[91] Many armies of the rival kings are stated to have been overcome by the Pallava king.[92] This shall refer to the continual victories and defeats which the Pallava kings had in their encounters with the Cāḷukyaṉ

85. DSC Tamil version (pp. 121-124). That the Lord was on his way to Sri Villipputtūr is not mentioned in G.P. (p. 50).
86. Peri. Tm. 3.4 : 10.
87. ibid. 2. 9. This is now known as Vaikuṇṭh Perumāḷ temple.
88. *History of India : Part I Ancient India*, p. 300.
89. ibid., p. 30?.
90. Peri. Tm 2. 9 : 1.
91. *History of India : Part I Ancient India*, p. 300.
92. Peri. Tm. 2. 9 : 7.

kings towards the end of the seventh and beginning of the ninth century. Paramēśvaravarman I (670–680 A.D.), Narasimhavarman II (680–720 A.D.) and Paramēśvaravarman II (720–731 A.D.) took part in these encounters. These references, which the Āḻvār gives, contain the word '*paṇinta*' having the sense of the past event, perhaps, lingering in the memory of the then generation.[93] The Āḻvār refers also to 'Vayiramēkaṉ' which was probably the epithet by which Dantivarmaṉ (754 A D.), son of Nandivarmaṉ, was known. The word '*vaṇaṅkum*' which is used here with reference to this king, conveys the sense of an event which was occurring in the period of this king.[94] An incident, which is recorded to have taken place in the twlelfth regnal year of this Vayiramēkaṉ, makes a reference to the restoration of a field to the Pārthasārathi Perumāḷ temple at Tiruvallikkēṇi by one Pukaḻttuṇai. This temple was built about 790 A.D.[95] The conclusion that could be drawn from these references is that this Āḻvār flourished in the middle of the ninth century.

Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's birth in the year *Naḷa*[96] which corresponds to 776 A.D., lends support to this period for him. This Āḻvār is said to have lived for 105 years.[97] He must have visited Kāñcī during the time of Dantivarmaṉ (795–845 A.D.).

Literary and linguistic evidences support this conclusion. A verse from the Nālaṭiyār (680 A.D.) is referred to in the *Ciṟiya-tirumaṭal* of this Āḻvār.[98] A number of proverbs in *Paḻamoḻi* (725 A.D) occur in some of the compositions of

93. There are other words here which point to the same conclusion, e.g., *muṉ-nāḷ* (2. 9 : 3), *paṇṭorukāl* (2. 9 : 4) and *aṉṟu* (2. 9 : 5).
94. Peri. Tm. 2. 8 : 10. This verse is sung in praise of the deity in one of the Viṣṇu temples at Kāñci. Aṭṭapuyakarattāṉ, by which name the deity is referred to here, shows the deity with eight arms (*puyams*).
95. *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, pp. 127, 128.
96. G.P., p. 46.
97. A.G.P., fol. 10 (a)
98. V. 114, Couplet 4.

this Āḻvār.[99] The story of Vāsavadattā in the Perunkatai (700 A.D.) is referred to in the *Ciṟiva-tirumaṭal*.[100] The type of poem named *cappāṇi* occurs in the compositions of both Periyāḻvār (785–870 A.D.) and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, one line actually finding a place in both.[101] Similarly expressions like '*yacōtai taṉ ciṅkam*' and '*yacōtai yiḷamciṅkam*' occur in the works of both Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Āṇṭāḷ (b. in 836 A.D.).[102] On the strength of the above evidences, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār could be taken to have lived during the period 776–881 A.D., at any rate in the first half of the ninth century.

The traditional sources, however, keep this Āḻvār at the end of the list which enumerates the names of the Āḻvārs, with the exception of some [103] which mention Nammāḻvār as the last one. He was perhaps the Āḻvār who lived up to a very late age (881 A.D.), but in the order of birth, he is to be placed before Periyāḻvār (born in 785 A.D.). In another respect, he deserves to be placed after Kulacēkara (born in 767 A.D.), Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār was born in *Kali* 398, while Tiruppāṇāḻvār was born in *Kali* 343. Leaving the *Kali yuga* reference here, Tiruppāṇāḻvār must be taken to have preceded this Āḻvār by 55 years. This agrees with 776 A.D., the year of birth of this Āḻvār, if the former is to be admitted to have been born in 721 A.D. This date should receive support but for the mentioning of Tiruppāṇāḻvār after Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḻvār (born in 727 A.D.) in the traditional sources.

PERIYĀḺVĀR AND ĀṆṬĀḶ

Periyāḻvār is only a surname while his real name was Viṭṭucittaṉ or Viṣṇu-cittaṉ (whose mind was set on Viṣṇu).

99. v 223 = Peri. Tm. 11.8 : 6; v 358 = ibid. 7. 10 : 4;
v 252 = ibid. 10. 9 : 8; v 253 = ibid 11.8 : 3.
v 370 = C. Tml. couplet 3.

100. Couplet 65. This evidence need not be attached much significance, as the story of Vāsavadattā was too well known from the beginning of the Christian era about which time, the *Bṛhatkathā* was composed by Guṇāḍhya who flourished near the Vindhya ranges.

101. Periyāl. Tm. 1.6 = Peri. Tm. 10.5.

102. Peri. Tm. 6.8 : 6 = T.P. 1.

103. G'.P.p. 99; R.N. 18.

He was a native of Śrī Villip-puttūr in the Rāmanāthapuram District and a brahmin by birth. He is believed to have been a victor in a religious polemic held at the court of a Pāṇṭiya king and won a bag of gold in prize.[104] The title of Paṭṭar-pirāṉ was further bestowed on him by the king.[105] The gold could have been spent in improving his flower-garden which he dedicated to the services of the local deity at Śrī Villip-puttūr.

One day, coming across a female child under a *tuḷasi* plant in his garden, he adopted her and brought her up as his own daughter.[106] When the girl came of age, he gave her sound education both on the religious and secular sides; and this befitted her to help her foster-father in his devotional activities. The story is that Āṇṭāḷ developed a fascination for the nice garlands made by her father and she decked herself with it before they were offered to the deity. She would steal away a few moments for the purpose during her father's short absence and would replace the garlands in their original place before her father returned. One day the father chanced to see his daughter's freaks and chiding her not to repeat the act of sacrilege, had no garland to present that day. That night Viṣṇu-cittaṉ had a dream in which God intimated to him His special pleasure in accepting only such garlands as had been worn by Āṇṭāḷ and not any other; in fact, they were doubly dear to Him on account of her using them. Thenceforth the devoted Āḷvār conformed to the God's desire by offering used garlands. On this account Āṇṭāḷ came to be known as Cūṭik-koṭutta-nācciyār (the lady who gave what was worn by her).[107] When she came of marrigeable age, she refused to marry any one except Lord Raṅganātha of Śrīraṅgam.[108] In her intense

104. Taṉiyaṉs beginning with "*Maṉṉar taṭamatil*" and "*Pāṇṭiyaṉ koṇṭāṭa*" (By Pāṇṭiya Paṭṭar).

105. G.P., p. 30.

106. Periyāl. Tm. 3. 8 : 4.

107. This story has become a theme of the well-known Telugu work '*Āmuktamālyadā* or *Viṣṇu-cittīya*' one of the five great *Kavyas* (epic poems) by the celebrated emperor Kṛṣṇadēva Rāya of Vijayanagar.

108. Nac. Tm. 1 : 5.

devotion to Viṣṇu. Āṇṭāḷ dreamt of her marriage with God; and described her experience in a hymn which is sung to this day when a marriage takes place in a Vaiṣṇavite household.[109] God appeared to the Āḷvār in a dream to declare before Him His acceptance of the girl in marriage and ordered her to be brought to his temple at Śrīraṅgam Accordingly Periyāḷvār took her there with great joy and when she entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of Raṅganātha she was absorbed into the idol.[110] Periyāḷvār was duly honoured as the father-in-law of the deity and then sent back to his native place, Śri Villipputtūr.

The identity of the Pāṇṭiya king referred to by Periyāḷvār in his hymns[111] as '*Naṭumāṛan*' and '*Apimāṉatuṅkaṉ*' is a matter of controversy among scholars.[112] The *Guruparampara works* identity him with Śrī Vallabha Pāṇṭiya[113] who had also the name Śrīmāra. This king reigned during the period (815–862 A.D.).[114] Viṣṇu-cittaṉ was born in the year *Kuroḍhana*[115] which corresponds to 785 A.D. and lived for eighty five years.[116] He could have been a contemporary of this king in whose court he won a wager. Āṇṭāl was born in the year *Naḷa*[117] which corresponds to 836 A.D. There is a reference in Āṇṭāḷ's *Tiruppāvāi* which mentions the setting of Jupiter (Vyāḷaṉ) and the rising of Venus (Veḷḷi-Śukra). Professsor M. Raghava Iyengar chooses December 18 of 731 A.D. as the date which Āṇṭāḷ had in view, and also as the date [118] which tallied with the regnal periods of both Kō-Neṭumāṛaṉ and his adversary Nandivarmaṉ II Pallavamalla (731–796 A.D.). But

109. ibid.. 6. *(Vāraṇam āyiram).*

110. G.P., p. 35.

111. Periyal. Tm. 4. 2: 7; 4. 4 : 8.

112. '*Apimānatuṅkaṉ*' appears as an epithet of Celva-nampi, the minister of Vallabha-dēva (G.P., p. 29).

113. G.P., p. 28.

114. *History of India, Part I Ancient India*, p. 229.

115. P.T.A., p. 5.

116. A.G.P., fol. 9 (b).

117. *Nālāyiram* (P. Krishnamacharyar's edition) p. 100.

118. *Ālvārkal kālanilai*, pp. 76-81.

recent researches[119] have brought to light the fact that Paramēśvara Varman II was reigning in (720-731 A.D.). So this date chosen by Professor Iyengar is untenable. Among the alternative dates furnished by the learned Professor, either 885 or 886 A.D. would meet the astronomical requirements. It might after all be straining the asronomical arguments a bit too much. It may therefore be proper to conclude that the Āḷvār and his foster-daughter Āṇṭāl probably lived round about 850 A.D.

NAMMĀḶVĀR AND MATURAKAVI

Nammāḷvār is considered by the Vaiṣṇavites to be the greatest of the Āḷvārs for the spiritual wisdom contained in his poems. He was born of a Vellāla family of Tirukkuṛukūr, now known as Āḷvār-Tirunakari in the Tirunelveli District. His parents gave him the name Māraṉ and Śaṭhakopa was the Sanskrit title probably given to him by his spiritual preceptor. Like other Āḷvārs, he too was a born *yogi*. Even as a child he left his house to take his seat under a tamarind tree which was adjacent to his house. He continued to remain there in meditation for sixteen years. He is held to be the greatest of the Āḷvārs and he was certainly the most philosophic minded among them. The *Bhakti* movement reached culmination in him. A disciple of his Maturakavi by name composed a decad in honour of his preceptor and ended the long line of Vaiṣṇava saints.

Maturakavi was a native of Tirukkōḷur in the Tirunelveli District and a brahmin by birth. While he was at Ayodhyā on pilgrimage, he happened to observe one night a brilliant light in the southern quarter of the sky. He took it as a mark pointing to the presence of a great person, started in the direction of that light and reached Tirukkuṛukūr where he found this prodigy. Maturakavi then became the disciple of Nammāḷvār, who began composing verses which the devout disciple got recorded in the palm leaves.

---

119. Vide Prof. K.A.N. Sastri's "New Light on Later Pallava chronology" in M.M. Potdar commomoration volume.

Nammāḻvār was born in the year *Bahudhānya* which corresponds to 798 A.D.[120] Maturakavi's birth was in the year 800 A.D (*Vikrama*).[121] Maturakavi installed Nammāḻvār in *arcā* form even when the latter was alive and conducted worship and festivals for it.[122] He lived for fifty years [123] after the passing away of Nammāḻvār in his thirty fifth year.[124] Maturakavi is also counted as an Āḻvār. These two Āḻvārs could therefore be placed in the second half of the ninth century.

The birth of Nammāḻvār in 738 A.D. would have been admissible, had not the Āḻvār sung in praise of the deities at Varakuṇamaṅkai[125] and Crīvaramaṅkalam.[126] Both these places were named after the Pāṇṭiyaṉ king Jatila Parāntaka Varaguṇa I (c. 765–815 A.D.), who had his kingdom extended on all sides, at the expense of the Cōḻas, Keraḻas and other neighbours.[127] The Āḻvār is evidently referring to these shrines when they were known with these names, though their existence prior to this period with a different name could not be ruled out. This enables to place Nammāḻvār in the first half of the ninth century A.D. and make Maturakavi his contemporary.

The years of birth of the Āḻvārs give useful material for fixing the period of the Āḻvārs. The *Kali* and *Dvāpara* eras mentioned in the sources do not make sense and deserve to be rejected in many cases. The names of the years mentioned in this connection help in arriving at the years of the birth of the Āḻvārs but this is to be arrived at only with the aid of internal evidences contained in the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The order in which the names of the Āḻvārs is enu-

---

120. G.P., p. 55.
121. P.T.A., p. 8; A.G.P. fol 8(b).
122. G.P., p. 60.
123. A.G.P., fol. 9 (a).
124. A.G.P., fol. 8 (b).
125. T.V.M., 9. 2 : 4.
126. ibid., 5.7.
127. *History of Ancient India*, p. 484.

merated and their life accounts are dealt with in the sources, is only to be discarded in favour of a different order which is based on other evidences which are available internally and from external sources. Till fresh materials are found necessitating a change that is followed here, the traditional sources are to be kept on only for the information they provide for the understanding the life accounts of the Āḻvārs.

Regarding the latest limit for the age of the Āḻvārs, the first half of the ninth century seems to be admissible. Yāmunacārya, who was born in *Kali* 4018, *Dhātu* year, was the grandson of Nāthamuni, who was not alive then. 916 A.D. could be the date of birth of Yāmuna. Nāthamuni learnt the four thousand verses of the Āḻvārs from Nammāḻvār himself who appeared to him through *yogic* power, that is, he did not meet the Āḻvār when he was alive. He met Parāṅkuśadāsa, a disciple of Maturakavi and was told by him that the compositions of the Āḻvārs were lost then for a long time. What exactly is meant by the long time is not clear. The *Guruparamparā* tradion means that the long time must be taken to be fairly long when the Āḻvārs' dates are placed around the beginning of *Kaliyuga*. This interpretation is untenable and the non-avilability of these compositions even for a generation may be interpreted in terms of a long time. This meeting must have taken place after 883 A.D. when Maturakavi passed away. Much significance could not be attached to the 'long time' referred to here. It only means that all the compositions were not then available. The non-availability of them at this time, which was not far distant from the middle of the ninth century when Periyāḻvār, Āṇṭāḷ, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Maturakavi Āḻvār were in the last years of life, could be explained only by admitting that some of the Āḻvārs, though they were contemporaries, did not have occasion to meet each other and as a result of this, their compositions were not known outside the regions where they flourished. Nāthamuni is said to have arranged the compositions of the Āḻvārs and made them recited by his disciples. This must have taken place about 900 A.D. It will not therefore be wrong, if the limits of the age of the Āḻvārs is fixed in the period 700–850 A.D.

CHAPTER X

THE NUMERALOGY OF NĀLĀYIRAM

A CONTINUATION OF THE EARLIER ANTHOLOGY TRADITION:

The *Nāḷāyira Divya Prabandham* literally, the Four Thousand Divine Treatise, codified by Nāthamuni in the tenth century (or the end of the ninth century) was only a continuation of the anthological tradition of the Caṅkam age. But the earlier anthologies were broadly classified under *Akam* or *Puṟam* and secular and religious subjects were put together as, for instance, in the *Pattu-p-pāṭṭu* in which *Paṭṭiṉa-p-pālai* which is purely secular is grouped with *Tirumurukāṟṟu-p-paṭai* which is religious. The dominance of anthologies and anthology-making seems to have characterised only the pre-Pallava period, but sporadic attempts at anthologising were to be seen in the field of religious literature in the Pallava and post-Pallava age, thus continuing an ancient tradition in literature. The *Ākam-Puṟam* dichotomy was practically given up in literature during these ages and the emphasis was shifted from *genus* unity to *species* unity. In other words, in the anthological age, if it could be so called, the *Akam-Puṟām*, distinction was the sole basis of classification. Taking the *Pattu-p-pāṭṭu* again, the general theme is *Puṟam*, but there is fantastic diversity in the subject matter of the different works like *Kuṟiñci-p-pāṭṭu*, *Mullai-p-pāṭṭu*, and *Paṭṭina-p-pālai*. Some of the anthologies would appear to have been made mechanically without strict attention to unity. A critical consideration of the principles of anthology-making in the early period of Tamil literature is as interesting as it is ticklish; and before it is attempted in its fullness, only a guess as to the reason for the combination of the different works can be hazarded. The anthologist must have weeded out a number of inferior works and put together only the outstanding ones, and therefore, could not discover as much of the necessary ingredients of unity of subject-mat-

ter as might perhaps have better justified the proclaimed classification as *Akam* or *Puram*. In the later periods, however, it was possible to deviate from the basis of excellence and combine works with identical themes even if the different works did not demonstrate the same degree of superbness, either in language or in thought. The Caṅkam anthologies paid special attention to beauty and accuracy of language and applicability to common social life on the basis of a pragmatic philosophy. The later anthologists who were very few cared for the unity of the subject-matter and as it concerned only religion in most cases, the language aspect became secondary. The mind and personality of the author is not only reflected in the work but the work itself conferred upon him social esteem and reverence. Any vagueness of thought in the process of giving verbal form to emotional fullness and ecstasy or the inadequacy of diction was made up for by commentators whose commentaries were more inspired by devotion to the authors for their personal spiritual worth than embark on an attempt to appraise their scholarship.

The two great anthologies of the post-Pallava period are the Śaivite *Tirumuṟais* and the *Divya Prabandham* the anthology *par excellence*. The difference between these two anthologies and the Caṅkam anthologies is obvious. A discussion was already under taken on the question of authorship and of the subject-matter elsewhere. While the *Nālāyiram* certainly continued an earlier literary tradition, it was different from, and, from the point of view of the technical aspect of anthology-making, it was perhaps an improvement on the earlier concept of anthology. The unity of the subject is paramount in the *Nālāyiram* in spite of the diversity of authorship and the chronological distance separating each work from others.

There is another difference which is remarkable between the *Divya Prabandham* and the earlier anthologies. While the *Divya Prabandham* is nothing more or nothing less than an anthology from the literary stand point, it is often equated with the *Vedas* and endowed with scriptural status. The same is true in regard to the Śaivite *Tirumuṟais*. The

Āḷvārs are invested with the sanctity attached to the *Vedic ṛṣis* (composers) who, however, chose to remain anonymous. The *Nālāyiram* at least after its codification by Nāthamuni, became a book of daily *'pārāyaṇam'* for Vaiṣṇavites in the Tamil country. The sanctity attached to it was such that even Andhras, and Kannadigas transliterated the work in the script of their own languages for their daily *'pārāyaṇam.'*

AUTHORSHIP :

The anthology consists of the works of twelve devotees of Viṣṇu called Āḷvars. The word *'āḷvār'* sometimes interchanged with the word *'ālvār'* meaning one who ruled the mind of God. Vaiṣṇavism elevates the devotee and even confers a divinity on him surpassing the divinity of God of whom he is a devotee. Therefore, this meaning is not unwarranted. But the exact root from which the word is derived is 'āḷ' or 'dive' and *āḷvār* would get the meaning as one who is plunged in God-enjoyment or a diver in divinity. The Āḷvārs were no doubt intellectually able persons, but their hymns were more the promptings of the heart than intellectual performances. Twelve Āḷvārs share between themselves the three thousand and odd hymns comprising of the *Divya Prabandham*. They are the first three Āḷvārs (Poykaiyār, Pūtattār, Pēyār), Tiruppāṇāḷvār, Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār *alias* Bhakti-sāra, Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭiyāḷvār *alias* Vipra-Nārāyaṇa, Kulacekarāḷvār, Periyāḷvār, Āṇṭāḷ, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, Saṭhakōpa *alias* Nammāḷvār and Maṭurakaviyāḷvār.

The uniqueness of the *Divya Prabandham* arises out of the fact that many of its authors were neither scholars nor deeply versed in the sacred lore. Yet their spiritual experience which they have conveyed through their hymns, which are their effortless outpourings of the heart, constitutes a very important phase in the development of religion in general. If a study were made of the different religions of the world, Śri Vaiṣṇavism appears to have introduced the new concept of *anubhava* or god-experiencing and god-enjoyment. The corollary to this *anubhava* is the direct perception of the countless ecstatic qualities (*ananta kalyāṇa guṇas*). The devotee's

enjoyment of these qualities is shared with others through the hymns. The intellect is overwhelmed by the emotions so that experiences rather than ideas dominate the lyrical expressions. The modern student of psychology has plenty of material in the *Nālāyiram* to build up a new branch of psychology in which the mystical experiences could be taken away from the field of abnormal psychology which is not the appropriate head under which one could study this inner development. Excepting Nammāḷvār who was undoubtedly a genius among men as he was among the Āḷvārs, all the other Āḷvārs have only their experience or *anubhava* of God to share with others. The *Prabandham* thus becomes the common-man's literature embodying the spiritual experiences of persons from the most common run of society.

Religion owes much to this new aspect of spiritual development. The concept of god-intoxication was drawn upon by all the religions of the world, and there is no doubt that the Āḷvārs were primarily responsible for this movement, if not the originators. Sufism which came later shows unmistakable evidences of how much it owes to Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in respect of the doctrine of ecstatic spiritual experience.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND: The *Divya Prabandham* literature as also the movement connected with it is definitely post-Caṅkam and excepting the unproved spurious[1] poetical epistle fathered on Periyāḷvār as his message to the Tamil Caṅkam there is absolutely nothing to warrant the remotest association of any of the Āḷvārs with the Caṅkam period, let alone the Caṅkam itself. Both the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite movements started as a result of the Āryan-Tamil interaction in the Tamil country under the stimulus provided by the first great monarchical power of the south – the Pallavas. In a sense, both the movements were parallel originating about the same time under identical stresses and stimuli with no rivalry, but as forces combined to destroy the influence of Buddhism and Jainism.

---

1. Vide: *Aṇṭakōḷa Mevp-poruḷ.*

The Pallavas fostered religion without any bias. All the cults and sects received their patronage. The climate was therefore favourable for a new religious explosion within Hinduism with its two aspects in the Tamil country. The age of the intellect and secularism which the Caṅkam age inaugurated was followed by an age in which emotions played a dominant role in literature because of the patronage of religion by the ruling power. The Pallavas either enlarged the old temples or added new ones, and the Tamil country became dotted with Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite shrines all over. The concept of idol-worship was considerably expanded and newer manifestations of Śiva and Viṣṇu were installed in temples. A large number of festivals were instituted on an elaborate scale. An atmosphere of religious activity and fervour was prevalent throughout the Tamil country and the Āḻvārs and the Nāyaṉmārs were the products of this atmosphere. They had something concrete to sing about and wherever they lived they were close to a *Tirupati* or a *Divya Deśa*, a place hallowed by the manifestation of Śiva or Viṣṇu. The *maṅgalāśāsanam* of deities which constitutes the bulk of the *Divya Prabandham* was more or less the expression of personal ecstasy at the time it was sung. Little would the Āḻvārs have imagined that their ecstatic outpourings before the deities would be collected and invested with scriptural status. The *maṅgalāśāsanam* of a deity became more or less a must, and in fact the *maṅgalāśāsanam* by an Āḻvār became the mark to invest a temple with unique repute.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CODIFICATION: Nāthamuni takes on himslf the credit for having collected the hymns of all the twelve Āḻvārs and codified them into the *Divya Prabandham*. He may be assigned to the later half of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century A.D.[2] Very little is known about the life of this great devotee who is ranked with the

2. *The Cōḻas*: (1955 edn.) p. 638. He was born in the year *Sobhakṛt* (823 A.D.) (A.G.P. II (b), and passed away before 916 A.D., when his grandson Yāmuna was born. The traditional version which mentions him as having lived for 340 years will have to be dismissed, as this comes into clash with the dates arrived at for the Āḻvārs in the previous chapter.

Āḻvārs and with Rāmānuja except that he was born in Kāṭṭumannār koyil in the South Arcot District and that he led a pious life as a devotee of the local deity. It is possible, as is claimed, that he continued the tradition of the Āḻvārs, but either his humility prevented his saving his own hymns for posterity, or they have been lost by neglect. His non-authorship, even if it is a fact, of any original work, does not make him inferior to any of the Āḻvārs. On the other hand, he became not only the compiler of the anthology of the hymns of the Āḻvārs, but he also synthesised their doctrines into one of the greatest movements of Indian history.

The circumstances under which he started his work on the anthology are, as usual, strange. During his time, the hymns of the Āḻvārs had gone into oblivion. In fact, he does not appear to have heard of their existence before he he had that experience which prompted his quest for the hymns. He had not heard of Nammāḻvār reputed to be the most intellectual among the Ālvārs.

The exact circumstances under which Nāthamuni commenced his quest of the hymns are as follows: He heard some worshippers recite ten verses from Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāymoḻi* completely ignorant of Nammāḻvār as their author. He became inquisitive because the address to God as '*Ārāvamute*'[3] which he found in the recitation captivated his soul. He asked the worshippers about the authorship of the verses and also of the thousand verses which the last verse of the recited portion alluded to as '*Āyirattuḷ ippattum*' (these ten verses from out of the one thousand verses). The worshippers directed him to Kurukūr where he could obtain the thousand verses of Nammāḻvār portions of which they had themselves memorised for their own contemplation and worship. Nāthamuni proceeded to Kurukūr, the birth place of Nammāḻvār, and after worshipping the deity of the place and at the direction of Parāṅkuśadāsa, a disciple of Maturakavi, went to the sacred spot under the tamarind tree in the hope of meeting the spirit of Nammāḻvār. But the expected

3. T.V.M. 5. 8.

miracle did not happen. He then recited the *Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu* composed by Maturakavi which he got from Parāṅkuśadāsa in Kurukūr 12000 times in front of the tree where the idol of Nammāḷvār had been installed. Pleased with Nāthamuni's devotion, Nammāḷvār appeared before him along with his disciple Maturakavi and taught him all his four *Prabandhams* with their full meaning. According to a slightly different account of the same tradition preserved in the *Divyasūri carita*[4] all the four thousand verses were revealed to Nāthamuni during this extraordinary interview. There is a third version according to which Nāthamuni met Maturakavi from whom he learnt that Nammāḷvār, after composing a big Book of hymns in Tamil and instructing the hymns to him, had attained salvation. The people of the locality had the misconception that the study of the work would be detrimental to the *Vedic* religion and so they threw it into the river Tāmpraparaṇi. Only one page of the Book viz., *Kaṇṇinuṇciṟuttāmpu* was saved. Nāthamuni recited this poem 12,000 times, as a result of which Nammāḷvār revealed the purport of the whole work to him. But when Nāthamuni wanted to know all the verses, he was advised to approach an artisan of the place who was inspired by Nammāḷvār to reveal all these verses to him. So Nāthamuni received the entire work from the artisan.[5]

Nāthamuni went back to his native place and organised a band of disciples[6] and started a musical choir for the new hymns as ordained by the God of his native place.

This is the only available account of how the discovery of the *Nālāyiram* was made. Nāthamuni justifiably takes the full credit for the discovery of all the hymns which he codified into an anthology. He certainly did much to popularise the

---

4. D.S.C., XVI - 13 to 21; G.P. p. 73.
5. *Prapannāmṛta* Chaps. 106 and 107 (as quoted by Sri S. Dasgupta Vide: *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III. P. 95.
6. The *Guruparamparās* mention that Nāthamuni had set these hymns to music with the help of his nephews Mēlaiyakatāḷvār and Kīlaiyakatāḷvār in the divine tunes (which please the gods).

recitation of the hymns during festival seasons and it is not improbable that he introduced special festivals at which the *Prabandhams* were to be recited by trained pandits.

One interested in the scientific approach to history might refuse to accept the veracity of the above story. It has, however, to be understood that every ancient tradition is a conventional method of stating historical facts, and one has to be acquainted with the symbols to be able to discover the history in a tradition. Barring the supernatural element in the story all else is true history. The supernatural is the inevitable ingredient in any traditon where there is an account of an effort to succeed in which divine help is necessary. One need not create imaginary situations by which Nāthamuni came by the hymns to substitute the supernatural in the story. Neither the historicity of Nāthamuni nor his being the anthologist of the hymns can ever be disputed. There is epigraphical confirmation of the historicity of Nāthamuni.[7]

THE DIVISION OF THE WORK : The following is the pattern of the arrangement of the Four Books of the *Divya Prabandham* by Nāthamuni called *Mutalāyiram*, *Periya Tirumoḻi*, *Tiruvāy moḻi* and *Ivar-pā*, the first three constituting the Icai-pā group :

Part I: Books of the Icai-pā group

Book I: Mutalāyiram (The Fist Thousand)

NAME OF COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF VERSES
1. Periyāḻvār Tirumoli	473
2. Tiru-p-pāvai	30
3. Nācciyār Tirumoḻi	143
4. Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi	105
5. Tiruccanta Viruttam	120
6. Tirumālai	45
7. Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucci	10
8. Amalaṉātipirāṉ	10
9. Kaṇṇinuṇ ciṟuttāmpu	11
Total :	947

7. *Anbil Plates of Sundara Cola.* E.I. XV. p. 54. Nāthamuni is referred to as Srī Nātha.

Of these No. 1 is the composition of Periyāḷvār, Nos. 2 and 3 of Āṇṭāḷ, No. 4 of Kulacekarālvār, No. 5 of Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār, Nos. 6 and 7 of Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭi Āḷvār, No. 8 of Tiruppāṇāḷvār, and No. 9 of Maturakavi Āḷvār. The absence of 53 verses to make up 1000 is not usually made much of and the calculation of 1000 is not meant to be arithmetical.

Book II: *Periya Tirumoḷi*

	Name of composition	Number of verses
10.	Periya Tirumoḷi	1084
11.	Tirukkuruntāṇṭakam	20
12.	Tiruneṭuntāntakam	30
	Total:	1134

All the three works are those of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār. The total number here is in excess of 1000, and should be treated in the same manner as in respect of Book I.

Book III : *Tiruvāymoḷi*

	Name of composition	Number of verses
13.	Tiruvāymoḷi	1102

The whole of this Book is the work of Nammāḷvār

Part II : *Ivar-pā group*

Book IV: *Ivaṟpā*

	Name of composition	Number of verses
14.	Mutal Tiruvantāti	100
15.	Iraṇṭām Tiruvantāti	100
16.	Mūṉṟām Tiruvantāti	100
17.	Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti	96
18.	Tiruviruttam	100
19.	Tiru-Āciriyam	7
20.	Periya Tiruvantāti	87
21.	Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai	1
22.	Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal	1
23.	Periya Tirumaṭal	1
	Total :	593

Of these Nos. 14, 15 and 16 were composed by the Mutalāḷvārs (Poykai, Pūtam and Pēy); No. 17 by Tirumaḷicaiyāḷivār; Nos. 18, 19 and 20 by Nammālvār; and Nos. 21, 22 and 23 by Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. The discrepancy in regard to the total in Iyaṛ-pā is rather more than could be treated with indifference. A discussion on the total numbers of verses in the *Nālāyiram* appears in this chapter and references to the statements of authorities are made not only in respect of the total number, but also of alternate schemes of numbering believed to be in vogue.

The *Kōyil-Oḷuku*[8] mentions a tradition by which on the day of the Tirumoḷi-Tirvāymoḷi Festival which he had himself instituted, Nāthamuni got the first three Books belonging to the Icai-pā category in the finest music pleasing to gods (Devagānam) and the fourth Book belonging to the Iyaṛ-pā category without any musical form. On the basis of this tradition, confirmation is sought to be given to the traditional categorizing of the hymns as Icai-pā and Iyāṛ-pā.

The categorizing does not seem to be arbitrary or purposeless. The first three Books can be set to music and definitely intended to have the highest musical value as a Tamil parallel to the *Sāma Veda*. The music is not incidental, but integral and vital. The appeal to God is through the most enjoyable medium. Maturakavi goes one step further and proclaims that he became ecstatic by singing the sweet songs of Kurukūr Nampi and that he did not know of any deity (superior to Nammāḷvār).[9] The existence of ancient manuscripts defining the appropriate tune (*Paṇ*) and tuning (*Tāḷam*) of the hymns also proves conclusively the nature and purposes of the first three Books.

THE ORDER OF THE ARRANGEMENT : Nāthamuni got into possession of the hymns in no codified form or in any order.

---

8. *Koyil-Oluku* pp. 33-37; *cf Śrī Raṅgam Temple* pp. 144-47.

9. *Kaṇṇinuṇciṛuttāmpu-2.* The implication is that Kurukūr Nampi (Nammāḷvar) was the object of his worship and he needed no other God.

The work of organising the hymns must have taken all his mental equipment and spiritual fervour. There were many approaches open to him like the chronological, the person to person, and sequence of religious topography. But his codification was based on the only objective of providing a scripture in Tamil with a status not inferior to that of the *Vedas*. This objective required a thorough reshuffle of the *Prabandhams*[10] and reorganization on the basis of the requirements of recitation in temples. His work must have been to some extent facilitated by the Āḻvārs themselves having presented the hymns inseperably complete in themselves in units of ten, thirty etc. Nāthamuni did not take liberty with these units, but just left them as separate divisions. For instance, each of the units of the first Ten of Tirumaṅkai-yāḻvār is organized into a division, but each Tirumoḻi (consisting of ten or more verses) is presented fully in its original form without a further mix-up of verses by different authors. In other words, he did not collect together stray verses from different *Tirumoḻis* by the same authors or by different authors just for the reason that they dealt with the same subject. Each *Tirumoḻi* has a concluding stanza in which the *phala sṛuti*[11] is given with the authorship which is an indication that the *Tirumoḻi* is full and intact. What Nāthamuni did was to arrange the hymns into tens possibly in conformity with the *Vedic* arrangement of the *sūktas*.

The purposes of his division and sub-division of the whole work are also to be related to his desire to present a Tamil parallel to the four *Vedas*. First they are intended to be recited like the *Vedas*. The *Sāma Veda* being the most pleasing to hear on account of its musical character must have inspired his musical arrangement of the first three Books under the broad category of Icai-pā.

There is needless controversy over the possible order in which the Āḻvārs might have composed the hymns. For

10. It means here 'poems' and nothing else.

11. The purpose to be attained by reciting the particular unit of stanzas is mentioned in the last stanza of each unit.

instance, the order of the *Prabandhams* of Tirumankai Āḻvār has engendered a lot of heat with very little light at the hands of enthusiastic expositors.[12] But we can easily dismiss the subject of order as purposeless, because the order found in the anthology as organized by Nāthamuni and finally fixed as unalterable by Vēdanta Deśika is the order of the anthologists and not of the Āḻvārs.

THE PLACE OF RĀMĀNUJA-NŪṞṞANTĀTI: There is a school of opinion which believes that the *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* forms part of the fourth Book, the *Iyaṟ-pā*. But the opposition to the belief stems from the travesty, arising out of the inclusion of the praise of a human being along with the praise of God. Historically the inclusion must be a later-day action as Rāmānuja was later than Nāthamuni and the codification had been settled by Nāthamuni. Nāthamuni does not appear to have designed the anthology as a *Eṇ-Nūl*. The *Nālāyiram* prefixed to *Divya Prabandham* is certainly of later origin; it probably belongs to the Vijayanagar period when a new interest was evinced in Vaiṣṇavism and Vaiṣṇavite literature. The prefix must have originated during the period of Vēdanta Deśika whose last year is believed to be 1371 A.D. or a little later as a Śrīraṅgam inscription of his composition would testify.[13] This can be accepted as almost the final answer to the origin of the prefix because for the first time it appears in a statement of Śrī Dēśika.[14] Tiruvaraṅkatta-

---

12. One section of Vaiṣṇavites holds the opinion that *Periya Tirumaṭal* is the last poem sung by the Āḻvār and according to them the order is *Periya Tirumoḻi, Tirukuruntāṇṭakam, Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam, Tiruveḻukuṟṟirukkai, Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* and *Periya Tirumaṭal*. This is the order held by Vedānta Daśika (T.P. 379). According to another section, *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* is the last poem of the Āḻvār and their order is: *Periya Tirumoḻi, Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam, Tiruveḻukkūṟṟiukkai, Ciṟiva Tirumaṭal; Periya Tirumāṭal* and *Tiruneṭuniāṇṭakam* (U.P.R. 9. P.B. Annankaracaryar's commentary).

13. *Madhurā Vijayam* - p. 65. (Śrīraṅgam inscription composed by Desika) in praise of Gōpanna who restored normalcy in the Śrīraṅgam temple after the defeat of the Maturai Sultan by Kampaṇa-II).

14. T.P. 382, 383.

mutaṉār, the most devoted disciple of Śrī Rāmānuja, after composing *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* had its *'araṅkeṟṟam'* (or the formal release) in the presence of Śrī Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Śrīraṅgam and it was Śri Raṅganātha who ordained that this work be included in the *Divya Prabandham*.[15] While there is no doubt about the literary excellence as also the wealth of *bhakti* in the work, it is not possible to believe that Śrī Rāmānuja could have permitted something in praise of himself to be included in what was purely a book of prayers and praises of God. However, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar composed a verse (Taṉiyaṉ) in honour of the Āḻvārs which is recited before any composition of the Āḻvārs is taken up for recital. Rāmānuja's name is included by him along with those of the Āḻvārs. He must have treated Rāmānuja on a par with the Āḻvārs and in all likelihood *Rāmānuja-nuṟṟantāti* could have been considered as part of the *Nālāyira Prabandham* during the life time of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar who was born in the year 1062 A.D.[16] and received the blessings of Rāmānuja. He died in his thirty second year. *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti*, in praise of Rāmānuja, could have therefore been included in the *Nālāyiram* at least soon after 1137 A.D., the date of Rāmānuja's death. Here Rāmānuja is not the author of any Tamil hymn but came to be venerated by Parāśara Bhaṭṭar giving him the status equal to that of an Āḻvār. In order to justify this, the composition *Nūṟṟantāti* in praise of him by Amutaṉār, could have been included in the *Nālāyiram*. The composition of the Āḻvārs were regarded as the *Tamil Vedas*. It is but natural that a poem in praise of Rāmānuja who was treated like an Āḻvār should get the status of the *Veda* and so included in the *Nālāyiram*. The appellation *'Prapannagāyatri'* lends justification to this.

---

15. cf. D.S.C., 18: 51, 52.

16. *Satsamtpradāya Muktāvalī* p. 13. A latest date 1122 A.D., which is suggested in the *Guruparamparās* in order to justify the tradition that he was a child when Rāmānuja made him his success or is not acceptable for the reason that his father Kūrattāḻvāṉ was 91 years old in 1122 A.D. For a discussion on his date, see T.A. Gopinatha Rao; *Lectures on Vaishnavism*. He must have lived for more than one hundred years.

There is another instance of praise of a human being appearing among the *Prabandham* hymns. It is a composition of Maturakavi in praise of Nammāḷvār. But the work had already attained classical value and both Nammāḷvār and Maturakavi were considered as Āḷvārs. Therefore Nāthamuni with whom alone we associate the codification chose to include the praise of Nammāḷvār in the *Prabandham*. The story of how Nāthamuni came by the hymns of the Āḷvārs makes *Kaṇṇinuṇ-ciṟuttāmpu* the starting point of the effort to unearth the missing hymns. If that were true, Nāthamuni must have had a special reason to include this piece of human praise among the God's prayers and praises. There can, however, be no disputing the fact that after Rāmānuja's passing away the interest in the *Divya Prabandham* which Rāmānuja himself had inspired must have led to a new look at the organisation of the *Prabandham*. By the time Śri Deśika's eminence was established, a little change over the content of the anthology could have already taken place and the *Divya Prabandham* must have got finalised into *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. One wonders if Śrī Desika himself might not have played the second Nāthamuni and without taking too much liberty with the Nāthamuni's codification regularised the contents by treating the *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* as definite part of the *Divya Prabandham*. In fact, it is Śrī Deśika who presents the first statement in regard to the numbers of verses by the Āḷvārs as also the number of verses in the whole anthology itself as Four Thousand. He also specifies twenty four *Prabandhams*[17] *including Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti*. Either Śrī Deśika was repeating traditional account of numbers or himself furnishing the picture of the final codification in which he had a prominent part.

VEDĀNTA DESIKA'S FINAL VERSION: Between Nāthamuni and Vedānta Deśika there must have arisen a new interest in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism with its supreme product in Śrī Rāmānuja who justly takes the credit as the codifier of the new Tamil Vaiṣṇavism, spade work for which had long before been completed by a number of religious leaders including Nāthamuni and Āḷavantār. During the period of Rāmānuja,

17 T.P. 383.

the old Nāthamuni code does not seem to have undergone any transformation. But during the period of Vēdanta Deśika there was the usual historical process of reaction and recession. By then the Vijayanagar empire had come into existence (1336 A.D.) and with it was renewed the old interest in the *Vēdas* and Vedic study. The *Divya Prabandham* which had for centuries remained the scripture, in a sense, of the Tamil Vaiṣṇavites was now getting alternative status with the original *Vedas* themselves. Vedānta Deśika, however, successfully staved off the trend which might have destroyed the status of the *Prabandham* as scripture, if only he had yielded to the temptation to join the movement of reaction. Under his leadership the very last codification must have been effected. This was done without any damage to the Nāthamuni code. There are two verses of Śrī Dēśika indicating this final codification. A free translation of the verses is as follows:

"If we are to take count of the number of hymns of the first Āḻvārs (Poykai, Pūtam, and Pēy) we get 300; Tirumaḻicai contributed 216; those of Nammāḻvār of profound vedic insight 1296; those of Maturakavi of eminent charity and *guru-bhakti* 11; those of Kulacēkara king of the Vañci country 105; those of Periyāḻvār, also named Bhaṭṭanātha 473; those of Āṇṭāḷ, a manifestation of Goddess Earth 173; those of Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭi 55; those of Tiruppāṇāḻvār 10 – to these must be added 1253 hymns of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār who was the veritable Death to his enemies and whose hymns sang the glorious praise of the world's Great Father Tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭaiyāṉ and also those in praise of Yatirāja (the prince of *yatis*) numbering 108 (composed by his worthy disciple Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār)".[18]

If the numbers found in these two verses translated together, when added become 4000, the prefix '*Nālāyiram*' seems perfectly justified. But the problem is not so simple as it looks.

The arithmetical statement of Śrī Vedānta Dēśika has now to be analysed. The number in respect of all Āḻvārs

18. T.P. 382, 383.

except Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār is correct. There is controversy only over two subjects: viz., the number of the two pieces, the *Periya Tirumaṭal* and *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* and the inclusion of *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti.* If the *Periya-Tirumaṭal* and the *Ciṟiya-Tirumaṭal* are considered one long poem each and if 108 *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* verses are excluded, the total number is 3776 which is the correct number. The additional 224 is got in the following manner:

Periya Tirumaṭal is taken as a subject in 78 verses and *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* as one in 40 verses. Between these two we account for 78+40=118 verses. The *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* contains 108 and the total comes to 226 verses. Śrī Vēdānta Dēśika thus adds 226 new verses to the number in the Nāthamuni code and rounds it off as 4000.[19] There can be no serious objection to this, but for certain criticisms in respect of an arbitrary dissection of one long poem of 297 lines into 78 smaller verses. A poem is a unity by itself and not a convenient stoppage of equal length. Both the *Tirumaṭals* are in kali-veṇpā metre which is peculiarly suited to the composition of a single poem of any length. According to conventions of prosody whatever the number of lines or the lengtn the poem is to be taken as a single unit and not to be dissected into verses. In this light the *Periya Ttrumaṭal* is just one long poem and the *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* is another slightly shorter than the first as the name itself implies. Nāthamuni who must have given the names to the two *Maṭals* to distinguish each has purposely adopted the simple names instead of any name suggestive of the number of verses for the simple reason that he took each *Maṭal* as a single poem as per rules of prosody. In fact, Nāthamuni had no obsession with regard to the total number.

Vedanta Deśika who made the anthology a definite Eṇ-Nūl did not wish to exclude the *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti.*

---

19. The calculation is as follows: The total number of verses in the Four Books comes to 3776 (947+1134+1102+593). If the two *Maṭals* are taken away the number reduces to 3774; the number is less by 226 to 4000 (4000—3774=226). Then the number 4000 is got by adding 3774 and 226 (78+40+108).

So he had to provide for 108 in his calculation of 4000 and provided 118 to the two *Maṭals* and made up his 4000.[20]

Appiḷḷai Āciriyar another keen student of the *Divya Prabandham* excluded the *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* from his calculation and instead considered both the *Maṭals* themselves as consisting of 226 verses. According to him the *Periya Tirumaṭal* consists of 148½ verses and the *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* 77½ verses. His dissection was into *Kaṇṇi* couplets and this was not against a common convention, though the counting of each *Kaṇṇi* as a verse is not warranted.[21] The author of *Nālāyira Divya Prabandha Akarāti* also follows the principle of dissection in connecting the *Matal* verses.[22]

Now there are two distinct numbers 3776 and 4000 and three approaches. Śrī Dēsika's version seems to be the most acceptable and final. Even today the inclusion and non-inclusion of *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* is a disputed issue though no irreverance is implied. In fact, whether included or not within the anthological system, the *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti* is given a place of honour as a separate section in every edition of the *Divya Prabandham*. It is also recited along with the other hymns in all Vaiṣṇavite temples. It could be concluded with the statement that no bones can be made about the arthmatical accuracy in respect of numbers. Even if a few verses are wanted to make up 4000 what is of essence is not the arithma-

---

20. The inclusion of human praise in a book of prayers to God was done on the basis of a spiritual belief. Rāmānuja was considered an *avatāra* of Ādiśeṣa and the praise of Ādiśēṣa is appropriate amidst praises of Śrī Nārāyaṇa whose bed the Ādiśēṣa is. Nammāḷvār is also considered an *avatāra* of Viṣvakśena and the inclusion of his praise by Maturakavi is also justifiable. Vēdānta Dēśika invested the inclusion with the seal of his approval to neutralise the vehemence of the objection to its inclusion.

21. The calculation according to Appillai Āciriyar is as follows:
The total number of verses in the Four Books comes to 3776. The number reduces to 3774 by taking away the *Matals*. Total number of Kaṇṇi couplets=148½+77½=226. Then we have 4000 by adding 3774 and 226.

22. pp. 26–28; 41 and 43.

tical accuracy in literature, but the completeness of each idea. The *Divya Prabandham* does not suffer in this respect. The number '*Āyiram*' has been considered very auspicious by the Hindus. Anything slightly less or in excess of it is also taken as '*Āyiram*'. Thus the 1008 names of Viṣṇu are called '*Sahasranāma*''. The *Puruṣa-sūkta* begins with the verse "*Sahasra Śīrṣā Puruṣaḥ, Sahasrākṣa Sahasrapād*" etc:[23] We could overlook the fact of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* consisting of 1102 verses by accepting its classification as an '*Āyiram*' by the author himself.[24] The *Periya Tirumoḻi* also containing 1084 verses gets the title '*Maṟai Pēr-Āyiram, Āyiram*, etc., from its author.[25] Therefore, there is nothing wrong in imagining that each Book contains 1000 verses and the four Books 4000.

THE PROBLEM OF TIRUPPALLĀṆṬU

There is another interesting problem in regard to the '*Pallāṇṭu*' part of *Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi*. According to some, it should be treated as a separate *Prabandham* and not as a part within another *Prabandham*. Again, it is intellectual gymnastics and nothing serious is involved in it. Perhaps for a scientific reason, we might say that the *Pallāṇṭu* cannot be a separate *Prabandham* and must be considered just as the first part of the first *Tirumoḻi* which should be considered to have ten parts collectively called a '*Pattu*'. As it is, the first part is the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and the *Tirumoḻi* itself commences as the second *Prabandham* separately. The first *Pattu* (Ten) in this arrangement is really nine because of the exclusion of the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* considered as a separate *Prabandham*. While there is nothing wrong in separating the *Tiruppallāṇṭu*, the organisation of the work suffers to some extent by its exclusion. Even at the commencement the equal division of ten *Tirumoḻis* is affected and only nine have to be designated a '*Pattu*' (Ten). The pattern of division of each *Prabandham* into ten *Tirumoḻis* each is common to the works of Periyāḻvār, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār which share the common connotation *Tirumoḻi*. This seems to be some kind of an application of an organisational pattern adopted in the *Vedas*.

23. R.V. 10.90:1
24. TVM. 1. 1: 11; 1.3 : 11; 1. 4 : 11; 1. 6: 11 etc.
25. Peri. Tm. 1. 5: 10.

The *sūkta* of the *Ṛg Veda* may be considered the genesis of the concept of *Tirumoḷi*. A *sūkta* is not a *sūtra* but a reasoning complete in itself. Its form is more elaborate than the aphoristic *sūtra*. In the same way, in each *Tirumoḷi* there are a number of verses though ordinarily even this number is to be restricted to ten. But this restriction is not strictly followed by the Āḻvārs. Those who argue that Periyāḻvār's First Ten did not include the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* arrived at ten as the exact number of *Tirumoḷis* totalled up all the verses in the nine *Tirumoḷis* excluding the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and got one hundred which they argued should be the correct quantity for ten *Tirumoḷis* at ten verses each. But while this approach may serve the purpose of an argument to explain away a difficult position, it fails to take note of the unity of the Ten.

In the *Periya Tirumoḷi* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* of Nammāḻvār the *sukta*-like *Tirumoḷis* are arranged as a series of Tens without any numerical inaccuracy. In the *Nācciyār Tirumoḷi* of Āṇṭāḷ the arrangement into Tens has not been adopted, because of the inadequate number of *Tirumoḷis*. The traditional belief is that division into Tens is called for only when there is material for more than two Tens. The *Nācciyār Tirumoḷi* does not satisfy this principle.

The *Tiruppallāṇṭu* part is considered separate also on the basis of eminent authority In the *Upadēśaratnamālai*[26] of Maṇavāḷa māmunikaḷ the reference to Periyāḻvār is in association with his having been the author of the *Tiruppallāṇṭu*. In the same work the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* is mentioned as the ancient or *Āti Tiruppallāṇṭu*, an artistic work without a parallel. One need not be led away by the overwhelming praise of the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and invest it with a separateness for this reason. That the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* is an excellent piece of composition in the richness of its devotional fervour, nobody denies. The question is whether it should be treated as a separate *Prabandham*. The volume of opinion leans on the side of its being an integral part of the First Ten. Those who would make it a separate *Prabandham* are swayed by its

26. U.R.M. 16, 19, 20.

superior quality as a hymn and its abstract form contrasted with the anecdotal hymns that follow in the First Ten. But there is nothing objectionable in taking the *Tiruppallāṇṭu Tirumoḻi* of the First Ten as indicating the subject matter of the other nine *Tirumoḻis* which is the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's boyhood. The references in *Upadēśaratnamālai* do not imply separate *Prabandham* status for the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* but equate it with the Vedic *praṇava* or *Om* which is an auspicious beginning for any thing. The fact that the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* is the beginning of every recitation of any *Prabandham* in the *Nālāyiram* only shows its greatness and not separateness. The *Tiruppallāṇṭu* has become the *Pūrvāṅga* of every auspicious recitation and epitomises the entire substance of the First Ten. Much credence need not be placed on *Upadēśaratnamālai* whose purpose is entirely different from evaluating the *Divya Prabandham.* It is purely a source of information about the date of birth and place of the Āḻvārs. Therefore a casual statement in it about the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* need not be made much of[27]. Periyavāccāṉ Pillai (1168-1263 A.D.) who is held to belong to a school which is opposed to that of Vēdānta Dēśika has treated *Tiruppallāṇṭu* as a hymn which forms part of *Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi.*[28]

The number of *Prabandhams* has been taken to be twenty four. This is arrived at in two different ways. One is to exclude the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* from the list of *Prabandhams* and include the *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti*; another is to exclude the *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* from the list and give separate status to *Tiruppallāṇṭu.* Vēdānta Dēśika must have considered the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* as part and parcel of the First Decad because he includes *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* among the *Prabandhams.* The division into twenty-four is long accepted and therefore there need be no controversy about it.

27. D.S.C. also refers to the two compositions of Periyāḻvār. V.: 76.
28. *Tiruppalāṇṭu vyākhyāna* (Kāñchipuram), p. 24.

THE COMPOSITIONS OF ĀḶVĀRS (I)

OF THOSE OTHER THAN NAMMĀḶVĀR

The compositions of the twelve Āḷvārs are twenty three in number, and they have been collected and collated later by Nāthamuni and given the name of *Nālāyira Prabandham* (The book of Four Thousand verses) or the *Divya Prabandham* (The Divine Treatise). The names of the compositions and the pattern of their arrangement in the book have been stated and discussed in the previous chapter. So, only the content or the purport of these compositions is attempted here.

THE FIRST THREE ĀḶVĀRS

The first three Āḷvārs[1], namely, Poykaiyāḷvar, Pūtattāḷvār, Pēyāḷvār are the authors of the first three *Antātis*'[2] centums of verses in the veṇpā metre (Nēricai Veṇpā) in praise of Viṣṇu. Each one of them has sung a hundred verses like a garland of flowers. The garland of verses (col-mālai) sung by Poykaiyāḷvār, Pūtattāḷvār and Pēyāḷvār are known as *Mutal Tiruvantāti* (first centum), *Iraṇṭām Tiruvantāti* (second centum) and *Mūṉṟām Tiruvantāti* (third centum) respectively. The first Āḷvār starts singing of the universal God from the point of view of the phenomenon: "The world is the lamp-dish filled with ghee of sea; the shining sun is the lamp. God is

1. U.R.M. 7.

2. *Antāti* is a type of Tamil poem (Prabandham) where the ending of the first stanza (a letter, syllable or a word) comes as the beginning of the second stanza and so on till the ending of the last stanza is the same as the beginning of the first stanza. This type of poem is composed in nēricai veṇpā or kaṭṭalai-k-kalitturai metre the total number of stanzas in an antāti being 100; sometimes the Prabandham is composed with stanzas less or more than 100 as for instance *Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti* and *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* (vide: *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai*-17.

the Light of lights. I make a garland of verses and place it at the feet of God, the Light of lights"[3] The second Ālvār begins singing not of the outer light but the inner light, the noumenon: "Love is the lamp-dish; pining for the Lord is the ghee therein; the blissful melting heart is the wick; I have lighted this lamp. God is the Light of lights."[4] The third Āḷvār sees the lamp lighted by Pūtattāḷvār the Light of lights, the great God of his heart. His ecstasy broke into a song: "I have seen Tiru (Lakṣmī). I have seen a golden-hued beautiful figure (body). I have seen the lovely effulgence of the rising sun. I have seen the bright disc and the conch in His hands. All these I see today in my ocean-hued Lord."[5]

The three seers then elaborate the glory of the Person they had seen in their lyrical poems or *Antātis*. They glorify God as the Inner-self and the Saviour of all beings and, at the same time, as transcending the universe.[6] By controlling the outgoing senses, they say that He can be intuited with the inner eye.[7] God, in His infinite mercy and love, assumes the name and form which the devotees desire and reveals Himself in the same form.[8] A spirit of tolerance is in evidence in the poems of these early Āḷvārs; probably there were forms of images where one half was Śiva and the other half Viṣṇu.[9] The stories of divine descent are told with a grasp of their essential message.[9a] Some of the stanzas in these *Antātis* are

---

3. M. Tv. 1.
4. I. Tv. 1.
5. Mu. Tv 1. cf. I. Tv. 67.
6. M.Tv. 9, 61, 62; I. Tv. 28; Mu. Tv. 37, 82.
7. M. Tv. 4, 12, 20, 32. 47, 50, 85; I.Tv. 6, 26, 42; Mu. Tv. 12, 14, 40, 79
8. M. Tv. 14, 44.
9. M. Tv. 5, 98; Mu. Tv. 63.
9a. M. Tv. 2, 3, 4, 7–12, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23–25. 27, 29, 33, 36, 39, 46, 47, 48, 50, 59, 62, 69, 74, 79, 90, 91, 94; I. Tv. 8, 10, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 61–64, 68, 79, 84, 89, 96, 99. 100; Mū. Tv. 4 6, 9, 13, 18-21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31-34, 36, 42, 46, 47, 49, 51, 53, 54, 62, 64–66, 68, 71, 6, 73, 74, 77, 80, 83, 85, 89–93, 95, 98, 99.

full of poetic beauty and they contain vivid poetic imagery.[10] The verses are full of humour.[11] Because of the simplicity of these Āḷvārs' language, there is a ring of sincerity in their utterances [12] These three Āḷvārs revel in the *avatāras* of Vāmana-Tirivikrama and Kṛṣṇa in their worship of *vibhava* form of God,[13] and the deity at Vēṅkaṭam in their worship of *arcā* form.[14] That is why the first two Āḷvārs, according to traditional scholars,[15] conclude their *Antātis* with the mention of these two *avatāras* [16] But the third Āḷvār, unlike the other two of his colleagues, ends his *Antāti* by mentioning the sacred feet of the Lord and those of His consort Lakṣmī[17] as *śaraṇāgati* for his salvation. There is only one verse in the whole of three *Tiruvantātis* on bridal mysticism.[18]

TIRUMAḶICAI ĀḶVĀR

Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār has left us only two compositions: the *Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti* ond the *Tiruccantaviruttam*.

NĀNMUKAN TIRUVANTĀTI : This work consisting of 96 verses in veṇpā metre (*Nēricai veṇpā*) is arranged in the *Antāti*

---

10. M. Tv. 38, 40; I. Tv. 75; Mū. Tv. 23, 45, 57, 58, 67, 68, 70–72, 75, 86, 89.

11. M. Tv. 6, 19, 24, 42, 47, 53, 54, 56, 67, 69, 70, 81, 84, 91, 92; I. Tv. 5, 9, 15, 16, 36, 49, 56, 61, 97, 98; M. Tv. 6, 33, 34, 48, 49, 52, 54, 60, 62, 64, 67, 73, 74, 81, 83, 84, 89, 91, 92.

12 M. Tv. 6, 16, 21, 30, 31, 50, 51, 57, 64, 67, 68, 72, 78, 79, 83, 86, 88, 89, 94, 95, 99; I. Tv. 4, 12, 21, 27, 34, 51, 55, 65, 74. 76, 81, 85, 87, 90, 92, 93; Mu. Tv. 2, 7, 8, 12, 17, 21, 23, 30, 35, 37, 40, 57, 59, 84, 92, 94.

13. M. Tv. 3, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20-23, 27, 34, 35, 48, 39, 50, 54, 62, 79, 84, 86, 92, 100; I. Tv. 5, 8, 10, 15, 18, 19, 23, 28, 30, 34, 36, 47, 49, 61-63, 68, 71, 78, 87, 89, 91–93, 98, 99, 100; Mū. Tv. 4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 36, 40-42, 47-49, 51, 52, 54, 58, 65, 68, 71, 74, 80, 83, 85, 90, 91, 93, 98,

14. M. Tv. 26, 37, 38, 39, 40, 76, 77, 82, 99; I. Tv. 25–28, 33, 45, 46. 53, 70, 72, 75; Mū. Tv 14, 26, 32, 39, 40, 45, 58, 61–63, 68–73, 75, 89.

15. Annangaracharia,, P.B: *Divyārthadipikai-Iyaṟpā Āyirām*, Vol. I, M. Tv, 100 and I. Tv. 10 (commentary).

16 M. Tv. 100; I. Tv. 100.

17 Mū. Tv. 99 and 100.

18 ibid. 69.

scheme. The main theme of this work is the supremacy of Nārāyaṇa, the consort of Śrī (Lakṣmī). He never thinks of Nārāyaṇa without the consort 'Tiru'–Lakṣmī.[19] The statement that has been made in the first stanza of this *Prabandham*,[20] that Nārāyaṇa is the supreme Deity is expounded by the Āḷvār step by step with reference to the *Vedas*,[21] *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.[22] He finally clinches his argument in the last verse with full confidence.[23] The Āḷvār was a monotheist as he himself admits[24] and preached that the one and only God was Viṣṇu while the other two of the triad-Brahmā and Śiva-were created by Him.[25] He was sure of a place in Vaikuṇṭha for himself as he had placed a garland of verses (col-mālai) on His feet.[26] He declares that he would not sing verses on humans.[27] The literature, the music, the *Itihāsas*, the *Purāṇas*, the five elements, the code of Mānu and the *Vedas* are, according to the Āḷvār, the will of Viṣṇu.[28] Some thinkers consider that their minds are impediments of realisation and seek to dementalise themselves. But this Āḷvār holds, and this is the most interesting from the point of view of sublimational psychology, that mind is not an impediment at all. It can serve as the most useful and potent instrument of devotion. An easy way is the way of praise and prayer of the Lord by the mind.[29] The Āḷvār speaks of the greatness of the devotees of devotees. The devotion of the devotees to the devotees is greater than the devotion to God.[30] There is one

---

19. Nāṉ. Tv. 53, 62.
20. ibid., 1.
21. ibid,, 69, 72.
22. ibid., 5, 8,·9, 10, 12, 15–18, 21, 25, 28, 30, 33, 49, 50, 52, 53, 57, 58, 68, 70, 71, 77, 78, 85, 87.
23. ibid., 96.
24 ibid. 2, 56, 66, 67, 69, 70, 74, 82, 84 – 86, 92, 93, 96.
25. ibid., 1, 19, 26, 31, 42, 43, 54, 73.
26. ibid., 65.
27. ibid., 75.
28. ibid., 76.
29. ibid., 81.
30. ibid.. 18, 89.

stanza in this poem in which the idea of a kuṛal – nay the very line itself – is embedded.[31]

TIRUCCANTA-VIRUTTAM : This is the second composition of this Āḷvār[32] which consists of 120 verses in cantak-kali viruttam and it takes its title after the type of metre employed. This work is admired for its harmonious versification. It is sung to the tune of four equal measures in a line where each foot consists of a long monosyllable, a disyllable and again a monosyllable. This composition is full of rhythmic beauty, perhaps because of the new device thus introduced. Though the style is majestic and elevated, the ideas are crystal clear. It can very well be said that this work expresses the very rhythmic outburst of the Āḷvār's heart, springing from his philosophy and religion, warped by the abundance of his love to the Lord. This work is more philosophical than the previous one. It is also more closely packed. It is more metaphysical in the sense that it enumerates the categories in such a way as to point out that everything is ultimately derived from the One. The Āḷvār sometimes composes verses out of a series of numbers.[33] These verses describe the categories of existence which are declared to have their source in the Brahman – a doctrine adopted from the *Upaniṣadic* texts. Though this poem begins by employing several of the numericals strung together in pleasing symphony, the significance of which is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary person, the latter portion of the *Prabandham* blossoms into high class mystic poetry.

There are some autobiographical references in his poems. He is believed to have been the son of a *ṛṣi* named Bhārgava, but brought up by a man of the hunting tribe.[34] He was a staunch devotee of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu alone, and

---

31. ibid., 23, cf. *Kuṛal*-851.
32. T. P. 381.
33. Tc. V. 1 - 5, 77, 79, 83, 114.
34. ibid., 90.

he knew no compromise or commerce with God.[35] Owing to his intense *bhakti*, he came to be known as Bhaktisāra. His divine experience was of the immanent type.[36] He declares that the Lord, before he was born, stood on Vēṅkaṭam, sat in Paramapadam and laid Himself down in the sea of milk (Kṣīrābdhi). That great Lord who is arputaṉ, (one with wonderful powers), who is *anantaśayanaṉ* (reclining on Ādi-śēṣa), who is *ādibhūtaṉ* (the first and foremost Being) and who is *mādhavaṉ* (consort of Śrī) stands, sits and reclines within his heart.[37] Such was the God-enveloping love of Bhaktisāra. By his intense *bhakti*, the *arcā* as static God became a dynamic Deity of *dayā* or grace.[38]

The Āḻvār was a great scholar both in Sanskrit and in Tamil,[39] acquiring equal proficiency in them, and his poems show that he had a competent knowledge of the sacred books of other sects and religions.[40] His mastery of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is displayed in both of his poems. He is not tolerant as the first three Āḻvārs but was even a rancorous opponent of the people of other faiths.[41] He worked ceaselessly for the spread of Viṣṇu *bhakti*. His work was a miracle of mysticism, for it restored the ancient Vaiṣṇavite religion of South India which had been threatened with extinction by non-Vedic sects. It is said in the *Guruparampara* that the Āḻvār had entered into the spirit of all the religions of the times before he became a Vaiṣṇavite, and when he was a Śaivite he assumed the name of Civavākkiyar. Civavākkiyar must be earlier than Paṭṭiṉattār of the tenth century who refers to him in

35. ibid., 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35, 44. 45, 48, 68, 72, 75, 78, 84, 86, 92, 98, 104, 105, 107, 111, 117, 118, 120.

36. ibid., 64, 94, 95.

37. ibid., 65.

38. ibid., 61 vide. Commentary of Śri P. B. Annangaracharіar (*Divyārtha-dīpikā*)

39. ibid. 112. cf. *Kuṟal*–334. The idea expressed in both is identical and even the words employed are the same in both.

40. ibid., 1, 4, 10.

41. Nāṉ. Tv. 6; Tc. V. 69.

his poem.[42] There is such a close resemblance in the metre and harmonic flow of the poems of Civavākkiyar and the *Tiruccantaviruttam* as to make one believe that both the poems were composed by one and the same author. Further, a number of stanzas occurring in both are almost identical and it is probably this which is responsible for the story in the Vaiṣṇavite tradition. Perhaps in the verses which have come down to us as Civavākkiyar's there are interpolations which because of their style should be assigned to a later age. Similarly the story given in the *Guruparampara*[42a] must therefore be a later interpolation.

TOṆṬARAṬI-P-POṬIYĀḶVĀR

Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭiyāḷvār has left two poems, *Tirumālai,* the sacred Garland of Hymns and *Tiru-p-paḷḷi Eḷucci,* the Hymn of the Morning.

TIRUMĀḶAI: The work consisting of forty five verses in aṟucīr āciriya viruttam is supposed to be the earlier composition of this Āḷvār. The poem glorifies the greatness of Lord Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Srīraṅgam. How deeply attached this Āḷvār became towards this deity can be seen from the fact that he would not even once mention the name of the presiding deity of any other sacred place in this poem or in his other poem. Even Tiruppāṇāḷvār who is very much attached to this deity has referred to the Lord of Vēnkaṭam twice in his only hymn of ten stanzas.[43] But to Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭikaḷ Lord Raṅganātha was everything, and there is no place left in his devoted heart even for the same God residing elsewhere. The verses of *Tirumālai* make a direct appeal to the heart. To recite them or even hear them recited 'invariably means being moved to the depth of one's soul. There is no attempt made in the verses to elucidate high philosophy as in the case of Nammāḷvār, or to indulge in high flown language as in the case of Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ. Though the Āḷvār, in the opening stanza, starts by saying that he has his senses

42. *Tiruviṭaimarutūr mummaṇi-k-kōvai*-11, 33.

42a. G.P., pp. 21, 22.

43. A.P. 1, 3.

under control, in the latter stanzas[44] he refers very often to the time when he was the slave of his senses, and appeals to the Lord for help and succour. The verses stating that he does not even seek birth in this world,[45] are those asserting the superiority of *bhakti*[46], and those of vivid description of Lord Raṅganātha[47] are of great appeal. Many of the sentiments expressed by him about his personal life[48] really touch the heart of the sophisticated temple-goer and the pseudo-religionist. He tells them that he once tried to deceive the Lord by masquerading as the true devotee; but when he remembered that the person sought to be cheated was not one outside him but one who dwelt in his heart and took note of his thoughts, even as they arose in him, he realised what a fool he had been, and laughed outright at his own stupidity in trying to deceive such a one.[49] His faith in Viṣṇu has taken so deep a root[50] that he became intolerent of other sects. In short, this poem touches the heights of religious fervour.

The verse-forms employed in this poem bear a strong resemblance to Appar's *Tirunēricai* and *Tirukkuṛuntāṇṭakam.*

TIRUPPAḶḶI EḶUCCI: This poem consisting of ten verses in eṇcir āciriya viruttam is supposed to be his later work. This is a fine piece of Morning Hymn seeking to awaken the Sleeping Beauty from His *yoganidra*[51] and make Him respond to the call of devotion for favouring humanity which suffers from the ills of *saṃsāra* and deserves the grace of God for redemption.[52] In a way, this composition is similar in con-

44. T.M. 5, 16, 17, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33.
45. ibid., 3.
46. ibid., 41, 42, 43.
47. ibid., 19, 20, 23. 24.
48. ibid., 5, 16, 26, 30. 33.
49. ibid , 34.
50. ibid., 2, 10, 35, 36.
51. This means the sleep of the Lord is of the contemplative type when He is described to be lying on Ādīśēṣa.
52. This is an instance of adaptation of the old form *Tuyileṭainilai* to suit the present need of the religion (vide: Tol. Poruḷ. Puṛatiṇai-iyal. 36).

tent to *Tiru-p-pāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ. Both serve the same purpose viz., arousing somebody from slumber though the ulterior motives in both are different. In this piece the symptoms of dawn are being described in such a vivid manner that even as one reads it one can see the glory of the dawn,[53] hear the sweet sound of the chirping of birds. and smell the morning fragrance of the blossoming flowers fondly opening their buds to the caressing kisses of the golden rays of the rising sun.[54] The total disappearanse of darkness is well depicted.[55] In the last verse the Āḷvār entreats the Lord to get up in order to bless him with an appointment as a servant to do service to the devotees of the Lord (aṭiyārs); he has come, he says, carrying in his hands the tuḷaci-garland and the flower-basket on his shoulders.[56] This poem reaches the heights of pastoral poetry.

KULACĒKARĀḺVĀR

PERUMĀL TIRUMOḺI: The Āḷvār is the author of only one poem known as *Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi* consisting of 105 verses in six types of metres[57] roughly divided into ten decads. He has a vivd imagination which helps him portray in dramatic monologues the scenes which appeal to him in the stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. But the Ramāyaṇa is his favourite theme. There are three decads each relating to the story of Rāma. In the first the Āḷvār sings a lullaby (tālāṭṭu) for Rāmā as a baby in the cradle.[58] This song of lullaby on the child Rāma by the Āḷvār gives really a joy to his readers. As one poet states "even when singing of the omnipotent divinity it is more charming and enchanting to sing of it as a child."[59] Love towards a child is

53. T.E. 1, 2, 3.
54. ibid., 5.
55. ibid., 7, 8.
56. The name borne by this Āḷvār. Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭi, meaning "the dust of the feet of true devotees" is really a title which he longed to have conferred on him as is clear from this stanza.
57. encīr āciriya viruttam, aṟucīr viruttam, cantakkali viruttam, aṟucīr viruttam. cantakkali viruttam, kaliviruttam, and koccaka-k-kalippā.
58. Perum. Tm. 8.
59. *Amutāmpikai Piḷḷai-t-tamil.* 1.

the innocent joy of selflessness. In that mood, poetry becomes sincere and captivates any heart. In the second of the decads he becomes Daśaratha and we hear the heart-rending cry of Daśaratha, the father of Rāma when the latter was exiled.[60] It is difficult to read this *Tirumoḻi* without being moved to tears. The pathos is smiting and killing.[61] The language and the sentiments are so realistic and touching. In the third, which is really the last decad of this poem, the Āḻvār gives a rapid recapitulation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in a graphic manner mentioning such important episodes which appealed to him most.[62]

As Rāma among the *avatāras*, Śrī Raṅganātha among the *arcās* exercised great fascination over the mind of this Āḻvar. There are three decads on the Lord of Tiruvaraṅkam. In the opening decad, he longs to have a vision of the grand Sleeping Beauty of Tiruvaraṅkam.[63] In the second, he reveals his zeal to be in the company of devotees; he points out that there is no greater profit or pleasure for the eyes than to look at the gathering of the meyyaṭiyārs (true devotees) of Raṅganātha who dance in ecstasy out of feelings of love towards the sweet Honey that resides in the small island.[64] The dust on the feet of these devotees is holier than the waters of the Gaṅgā.[65] In the third, the Āḻvār admits his madness after God.[66] The best known hymn of this Āḻvār is the one which

60. ibid.; 9 Kampaṉ utilises this episode in his immortal Epic. In his *Rāmāyaṇa* a speech of this kind comes before Rāma actually leaves for the forest whilst Daśaratha is being attended by Kausalyā (*Ayadhyā Kāṇḍa* 4: 54-65).

61. cf Rāmā's lament K.R. Ayodhyā Kānda: Tiruvati-cūttup-paṭalam. (60-66).

62. Perum. Tm. 10,

63. ibid., 1.

64. ibid., 2.

65. ibid., 2: 2. The phrase 'toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭi'-"the dust on the feet of the devotees" is found as the name of an Āḻvār. In all likelihood, this is a reference to Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi Āḻvār, who, it has been proved in the first chapter of this section, was a predecessor of this Āḻvār.

66. ibid., 3.

relates to the Lord of the Seven Hills.[67] His God-love has assumed anextraordinary aspect. To be near Him, to gaze at and enjoy the beauty of His coral lips, he is willing to forego even the essence of his soul and become an inanimate, senseless and thoughtless object. He seeks to be a stork, a fish, a bearer of the Lord's golden spitoon, a flowering tree, a bush, a peak, a river, a pathway, a stepping stone[68] at the gate in the *sanctum sanctorum,* in that sacred Hill. The similes employed by him in the Vittuvakōṭu hymn are quite appropriate and convincing.[69]

Kṛṣṇa, the sweet Enchanter, has claimed the attention of this Āḷvār in two decads. In the one he puts himself in the place of Dēvakī, the mother who gave birth to Kṛṣṇa, and weeps and wails over the miserable fate of that lady who was obliged to give up the Divine Child born to her to the care and custody of another (Yaśōtā), to whom alone was given the transcendental bliss of enjoying His cradle-days and watching with delight His lisps and numerous playful pranks.[70] The sentiments of an illfated mother have been expressed here with dramatic technique. In the other, he assumes the role of a gōpī who has found out what a "black-guard" this Black God really is, and assaults Him in the excess of her love towards Him, and accuses Him of several misdeeds and breaches of faith.[71] It presents delightful reading.

TIRUP-PĀNĀḶVĀR

AMALANĀTIPIRAṈ: This poem of Tiruppāṇāḷvār is the shortest one in the collection of *Nālāyiram*. It consists of only one beautiful hymn of ten verses in two types of

---

67. ibid., 4.
68. ibid. 4:9. It is because of this Āḷvār that the step to the sanctum sanctorum in every Vaiṣṇavite shrine is known as Kulacēkara-p-paṭi.
69. ~~Perumāḷ Tm.~~ ibid 5.
70. ibid., 7.
71. ibid., 6. cf. TVM. 6.2.

metres[72]. *Amalanātipirāṉ*, the name of poem, is really not a name, but the opening words of the poem. The verses describe graphically the Āḷvār's grand vision of the Lord at Tiruvaraṅkam (Śrīraṅgam) - His sacred feet,[73] His apparel,[74] His navel,[75] His waist girdle,[76] His chest,[77] His neck and shoulders,[78] His face and crown,[79] His eyes,[80] and His whole body,[81] all so beautiful and captivating to the Āḷvār's heart, so life-like and divine. The Āḷvār winds up the poem by stating how the cloud-hued cowherd and butter-mouthed Lord has stolen his heart.[82] The last line of this hymn breathes the transcendent air: "My eyes having beheld Thee cannot verily have any place for seeing anything else." The Āḷvār follows here the tradition that physical frame of the deity should be described from foot to head *(pādādi keśa)*. It is the Āḷvār's vision of the Sleeping Beauty that is beautifully projected forth in these verses. God is defined as amalaṉ, the eternally pure, whom only the pure in heart could see. He adores God as the Holy, the Pure and the Perfect *(amalaṉ, vimalaṉ, nirmalaṉ)* and feels blessed by the fact that the divine love invaded his inner being and cleansed him of all sins.

This beautiful poem has appealed so very much to the heart of the great scholar, philosopher, logician and poet, Vēdānta Deśika, who has written a commentary on these ten verses. For an appreciative description of beauty in the *arcā* form of the Lord this poem has no equal. All the other qualities of God are really derived or inferred from that

72. āciriyat-turai and kaliviruttam.
73. A.P. 1.
74. ibid. 2.
75. ibid. 3.
76. ibid. 4.
77. ibid. 5.
78. ibid. 6.
79. ibid. 7.
80. ibid. 8.
81. ibid. 9.
82. ibid. 10.

beauty, and enjoyed as adjuncts to that beauy. The exquisite simplicity of this beautiful hymn and the deep, sincere emotion it evokes make it an outstanding contribution among the poems of the Āḷvārs. Vēdānta Deśika has aptly said that the hymn of this Āḷvār contains the quintessence of the *Nālāyiram*,[83] that it is the seed of all that the Vēdāntins have said[84] and that it is the essence of the four *Vedas*.[85]

TIRUMAṄKAIYĀḶVĀR

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, also known as Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ, Kaliyaṉ and Parakālaṉ, is the most learned of the Āḷvārs and he has left to us six poems, namely, *Periya Tirumoḻi*, *Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam*, *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam*, *Tiruveḻukkūṟṟirukkai*, *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal*, and *Periya Tirumaṭal*.[86] He is quite conscious of his own distinction as a Tamil scholar,[87] like Campantar among the Nāyaṉmārs. The works of this Āḷvār and those of Nammāḷvār constitute the major portion of the Tamil *Veda* (Tamil Maṟai) by which name the *Nālāyiram* is known to the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites.

PERIYA TIRUMOḺI: This beautiful long poem consisting of 1084 verses in eleven types of metres[88] arranged in eleven centums each containing ten decads (hymns) of at least ten verses in each decad is the collection of lyrical utterances on his enjoyment of the beauty and other auspicious qualities of different deities installed at the various sacred places from Badarināth[89] in the north and Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi[90] in the south. Two shrines, those of Nācciyārkoyil[91] near Kumbakonam and

83. T.P., 130.
84. ibid., 131.
85. ibid., 132.
86. U.R.M. 9.
87. Peri. Tm. 1. 7: 10; 4.4: 10; 5.1 : 10? 6.6: 10; 9.3 : 10; 10.1 : 10.
88. Koccakak-kalippā, kaḷittāḷicai, kalinilaitturai, veṇṭurai, āciriyatturai, aṟucīr āciriya viruttam, eḻucīr āciriya viruttam, eṇcīr viruttam, kaliviruttam, vañci viruttam, and cantakkaliviruttam.
89. Peri, Tm. 1.3; 1.4.
90. ibid., 9.5; 9.6.
91. Called Tirunaṟaiyūr in the poem. ibid., 6.4, to 6.10; 7.1 to 7.3.

Tirukkaṇṇapuram[92] near Naṇṇilam in Thañjavūr District, have 100 verses each at a stretch to themselves. Several others have far less, but even then quite a considerable number to themselves. In all, this Āḷvār has sung about eighty-six sacred places out of the total of 108 according to a Vaiṣṇavite tradition.[93] His journey from one end of the country to the other singing the praise of God and practising His loving presence is really the pilgrim's progress to and in God and ascent from earth to heaven. He begins this poem in his own characteristic way with a confession of his previous sinfulness followed by the feeling of security obtained by uttering the holy name of Nārāyaṇa and ends it with a celebration of the joy of *mukti* or the freedom from the fear of *saṃsāra*.[94] The agonies of *saṃsāra* are compared by him to the state of a storm-tossed vessel,[95] of the ant caught up between the burning ends of a faggot,[96] the pack of jackals on an island enveloped by rising floods[97] and a person facing a cobra in his residence.[98] His self-accusations are spontaneous and sincere, though disproportionately heavy to the actual sins committed by him and not merely conventional self-reproach. They were the result not of sick-mindedness but of devotional sensitiveness and fervour.[99] In his hymns of glory of God, he visualises the varied incarnations of Viṣṇu, especially of Śrī Kṛṣṇa owing to his *saulabhya* or unique accessibility even to the worst sinner.[100] He calls out to his fellow-beings not to starve their senses or go to the forest,

92. Peri. Tm. 8.1 to 8 10.
93. Vide: Piḷḷaip-perumāḷ Ayyengar's *Nūṟṟeṭṭu-t-tiruppati Antāti*'.
94 Peri. Tm. 1.1
95. ibid. 11.8: 2.
96. ibid. 11.8: 4.
97. ibid. 11.8: 5.
98. ibid. 11.8: 3.
99. ibid. 1.1: 1; 3.5 : 8; 1.6:1 to 9; 1.8; 1.10; 2.1; 2.5; 2.10; 3.5; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 4.3; 4.6; 4.7; 4.9; 5.3; 5.6; 5.7; 5.8; 5,9; 5.10; 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 6.4; 6.8; 6.9; 6.10; 7.1; 7.2; 7.3; 7.4; 7.5; 7.6; 7.7; 7.9; 7.10; 8.6; 8.8; 8.9; 8.10; 9.3; 9.5; 9.7; 9.8; 9.9; 9.10; 10.9; 10.10; 11.1; 11.2; 11.4; 11.8.
100. ibid., 10.6; 11.5 Besides these decads, there are innumerable references in the Peri.Tm.

and do rigid *tapas* amidst the five fires ; he advises them to quench their passion by communion with God.[101] But he always emphasizes that to realize God one should be righteous, should subdue or sublimate one's five senses and fix one's mind on Him with love and devotion. He prefers the feminine path of bridal love.[102] He uses folk-song motifs.[103] In one decad he makes the *rākṣasas* pray for refuge from Rāmā and seek his sympathy[104] and in another he makes them dance praying the monkey chiefs not to harm them any further since they recite Rāmā's name with devotion.[105] The Piḷḷai-t-tamiḻ motif is also found in this poem.[106] Besides his innumerable references to *vibhava* forms of God in the poem, he revels in *avatāras* in one decad.[107] In another hymn the Āḻvār speaks of nine *avatāras*.[108] In one group, the verses contain in each of them a genenal statement, rather in the form of a proverb, to support the particular event described therein.[109] This long poem contains a mine of information on matters of great interest useful for life.

THE TWO TĀṆṬAKAMS : *Tāṇṭakam*[110] is a form of poetry, generally a poem on God which consists of *viruttams*

---

101. ibid. 3;2: 1, 2, 3 etc. (whole decad) 3.4 (whole decad).
102. ibid. 2.7; 2.8; 3.6; 3.7; 4.8; 5.5; 8.1; 8.2; 8.3; 8.5; 9.2; 9.3; 9 4; 9.5; 9.9; 10.9; 10.10; 11.1; 11.2; 11.3.
103. Where there was not a Tamil king as in the Caṅkam age, the poets had to look to the common man for support. They therefore began to sing folk-songs and develop folk literature. The genesis of this interest in the common man began only at the time of Nāyaṉmārs and Āḻvārs. The earliest work on Śaiva Siddhānta, *Tirūvuntiyar* by Uyyavanta Tēvar, is a folk song. This motif was successfully handled by Tattuvarāyar, the eighteen *cittars*, Tāyumāṉavar and Rāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷ.
104. Peri. Tm. 10.2. Poṅkattam Poṅkō.
105. ibid. 10.3, Kulamaṇitūram.
106. ibid. 10.4; 10.5 cf. Periyal. Tm. 3.1. and 1.6 respectively.
107. idid. 11.4.
108. ibid. 8.8.
109. ibid. 10.9., Paḻamoḻiyāl paṇintu uraitta pāṭṭu.
110. This is one of the compositions of ninety-six kinds, and the *Pāṭṭiiyals* (grammatical works on prosody and poetics) give us the explanations about a number of these compositions. But no work

of four feet verses containing *six cīrs* or *eight cīrs*. A Poem containing *six-cīr viruttams* is known as *Kuṟuntāṇṭakam* and the one containing *eight cīr viruttams Neṭuntāṇṭakam*.[111] The genesis of this form of poetry is traced to Tirunāvukkaracar *alias* Appar whose *Tirut-tāṇṭaakam* is so simple, so sincere, full of all the varying emotions of his heart, full of that divine message so appealing even to an illiterate person. It is said that in this particular kind of composition he has no equal and he has rightly earned the name 'Tāṇṭaka-vēntu'. (Master of Tāṇṭakam). The *Tāṇṭakams* of Appar are only *Neṭuntāṇṭakams*.

It is perhaps that Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār has modelled his two *Tāṇṭakams*, namely, *Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam and Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* on Appar's poems. The former poem contains twenty verses in *aṟucīr āciriya viruttam* and the latter thirty *pacurams* in *eṇcīr āciriya viruttam*. Some scholars will classify the thirty verses of the second poem into three decads on the basis of its content or purport. *Kuṟuntāṇṭakam* is not found any where else in Tamil literature except in the *Divya Prabandham*.[112] In the first poem, the Āḻār says

has arrived yet at the figure ninetysix. These *Paṭṭiyals* give some astrological explanation of words and metres as being auspicious and unauspicious with reference to the nativity, star and caste of the patron on whom a poem is composed. This poetic tradition of astrological convention is not accepted by the commentators like Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, probably because it is not even hinted at in *Tolkāppiam* (vide commentary on *Paṭṭuppāṭṭu* by Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar-*Malaipaṭukaṭām*, 1.145.).

111. The principle of *Tāntakam* is not based on the canons of Tamil Grammar. It is based on Sanskrit prosody and poetics according to which the principle is based on letters called '*laghu*' and '*guru*' (vide *Paṉṉirupāṭṭiyal* commentary to Sūtra 196). There is a letter-limit to each foot of a Tāṇṭakam verse. In a *Kuṟntāṇṭakam* the lower limit is fifteen and the upper limit is twenty six letters including the consonants; in a *Neṭuntāṇṭakam* verse each foot should contain more than twenty six letters.

112. But this poem is equated with Appar's Tirunēricai in accordance with the rules of prosody. *(Paṉṉiru Tirumuṟai Varalāṟu*-pp.321, 331.). Another scholar equates *Taṇṭakam* with '*Koccakavorupūku*' of *Tolkāppayim*) Yāḷ Nūl, pp.219-220).

that the Lord has taken abode in him;[113] he cannot leave him and he will enjoy his innumerable auspicious qualities.[114] The Lord is the unsupported supporter. He is the independent on whom all can depend or do depend.[115] The only way to get rid of the possible causes of the mental distresses is to praise the lotus feet of the Lord; there seems to be no other method or means.[116] God came to him, out of His own accord and revealed himself in the inner eye and by this vision, there has occurred purification; after this vision of the Divine the Āḷvār refuses to see any thing else.[117] It is this vision that is the true beginning of faith which serves as the raft to cross over the oceanic experience of *saṃsāra*. Not *yōga* nor steady seat nor the control of senses nor *prāṇāyāma* grants this fixity of mind but His grace that cuts our sins and grants the Vision of the most attractive form which alone can salvage man and his soul.[118] Worship of God, to chant His name, to sing His praise in all forms of His are the ways and the means to this intimacy of Vision and the Kingdom Eternal, the resplendent abode of Bliss.[119] In the second poem the Āḷvār speaks directly in the first decad; and in the second and third decads he speaks in the guise of the bride's mother and the bride respectively and so they relate to the bridal mysticism of the Āḷvār. It is said that the famous Vaiṣṇava ācārya Parāśara Bhaṭṭar was an adept in discoursing on this poem especially the twenty first verse. The verses in this poem are not given to verbosity or florid style; they are simple, soulful utterances which reach the innermost recesses of our beings.

TIRUVELUKKŪṚṚIRUKKI: This is a beautiful single Hymn of Surrender, to the deity at Kumbakonam Who is in the lying state. It consists of forty seven lines and is in *āciri-*

113. T.K. 1.
114 ibid. 2.
115 ibid. 6.
116. ibid, 11.
117. ibid. 12, 13.
118. ibid. 18.
119. ibid. 15, 16. 17 and 20.

yuppā metre[120] (*Nilaimaṇṭila āciriyappā*) of Tamil prosody. It belongs to '*rathabandha*', a kind of poem among the group of poems called acrostics (*citrakavis*). The words and phrases of this poem can be arranged in the form of a *ratha* or chariot the upper and lower parts of which are symmetrical to each other.[121] The Āḻvār extols the creative and saving power of the Lord and signifies absolute surrender to Him. So we have in this poem a complete illustration of the multiplanal nature of God, His absolute and sovereign transcendence as well as the beneficence of the Deity fully inculcated. It reveals the *tattvaṃhita* and *puruṣārtha* and thus gives an integral account, as far as it goes, and reveals that it is only an integral surrender, or surrender to the godhead in all levels of His and our existence that can help the attainment.

THE TWO MAṬALS: *Maṭal* is one aspect of *Akam* poetry and the literary composition on that aspect of love came to be called *Maṭal*. This composition will usually be in *Kali-veṇpā* metre. Of the two beautiful poems on the deity at Tirunaṟaiyūr, otherwise called Nācciyārkoil near Kumbakonam, the shorter one consisting of 155 lines was called ***Ciriya Tirumaṭal*** and the longer one consisting of 297 lines ***Periya Tirumaṭal***. In Caṅkam literature itself we have refe-

120. *Āciriyappā* is of four kinds: *Nēricai āciriyappā; Nilaimaṇṭila āciriyappā Iṇaikkuṟaḷāciryappā* and *Aṭimarimaṇṭila āciriyappā*. In the first kind there will be four cīrs in all the lines excepting the last but one which consists of only three cīrs; in the second all the lines contain four cīrs, in the third the first and the last line contains four cīrs and the lines in between two cīrs and three cīrs; and in the fourth if stress is given in the beginning, the middle at the end, there won't be any change either in the rhythm or in the meaning. There is no fixed number of lines in the four kinds. (vide; *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai-28*)

121. Even the saints and the religious poets indulged in this kind of acrostics. There are five poems of this kind, so far known to Tamil literature. The poem of this Āḻvār and a poem found in *Māṟaṉ Alaṅkāram* by Tirukkurukai - p-perumāl kavirāyar belong tō Vaiṣṇavite literature; the poem found in the *First Tirumuṟai* by Campantar and the one composed by Nakkīratēva Nāyaṉār found in the *Eleventh Tirumuṟai* belong to Śaivite literāture. The fifth poem is found in *Yāpparuṅkala Virutti* with *varia lectico* (p. 500).

rences to the possibilities of a lover committing suicide when his love is not returned.[122] A Caṅkam poet Mātaṅkīraṉār who has sung only two poems[123] on this minor theme has his name prefixed by the title 'maṭal pāṭiya' (one who has sung maṭal). The maṭal is stated to be the palmyra stalk which the lover rides on in order to make public the love that he bears in acutest form. The *Tolkāppiyam* mentions this as maṭal-mā, that is, a horse made of palmyra stalk.[124] In *Kalittokai* we get a detailed description of a disappointed unfortunate lover besmearing himself with ashes, wearing the wreaths of unblossomed erukkam buds (*calatropis gigantea*) on his chest, holding in his right hand the portrait of the lady whom he loves and being dragged round whilst he is seated on a horse made of the sword-like palmyra branches.[125] This in motion will cut through his body. The idea behind this act is to create a public rumour or clamour about her and her lover, so much so, that the lady in love will come to know about his feelings. That the maṭal leads to this public scandal or sympathy, whatever be the case, is considered to be a great gain, for the goal is the thing and not the means. There is nothing unworthy in such unilateral love, even though the maṭal may not be the wisest way of making one's innermost inexpressible desires. But love knows neither rhyme nor reason, neither decorum nor decency. Its one aim is to achieve the beloved or die. In *Akam* poetry there is merely a threat to perform this ritual. Man only is qualified to undergo this trial.[126] But Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār in both his

---

122. NRR. 146, 152, 342, 377; KRN. 14, 17, 32, 173, 182. The reference is for pure *aintiṇai* only.

123. KRN. 182; NRR. 377.

124. TLK. Poruḷ - *Sūtra*. 99 (Ilam).

125. Neytal Kali. 21, cf. *Ilakkaṇa Vilakkam-Sūtra*. 857 and KRN. 17. There is a reference in *Tirūkkuṟāl* also. Vide Kuṟal. 1131 to 1137. Vide also: *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*. (1956), p, 123.

126. *Paṉṉiru-pāṭṭiyal* - sūtra. 146. But in the next sutra (147) women also get the qualification to perform the ritual if gods become their heroes or lovers. But it is in any way not the Tamil ideal. vide. Kuṟaḷ - 1137; *TLK. Poruḷ* - Sutra. 54 (Ilam). The commentator Iḷampūraṇar emphsizes that the act will be performed by man only.

Maṭals, makes this threat come from a woman. The woman here is the soul in love with God. The Āḻvār himself feels this threat by a woman is unknown in the Tamil Land as it is exotic to the Tamil ideal, but he will prefer, he says, to follow the Northern Practice (*vaṭaneṟi*) which permits even women to exhibit their erotic ardour[127] and therefore appeals to the story of Vācavatattai going on her own accord in search of her husband Utayaṉaṉ.[128] Even according to the philosophy of this Āḻvār, God the lover should come to save the soul; but the soul is so evolved as to bear no separation any more and hankers, if one may use the word, after the Lord; and this may be described as running after Him. The mere reference to resort to such an act of maṭalēṟutal by a lover is made in '*aṉpiṉ aintiṇai* (idealised love aspects);[129] but the actual riding is treated in *peruntinai* (improper lust).[130] The maṭal motif is beautifully handled by Tattuvarāyar and others for expressing their love towards their Guru[131]. But in later day works this motif came to be used in an obscene ways.[132] A new and glorious use, however, has been made of this conception of maṭal by Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai. The poet speaks of Christ's crucifixion as Māṭalēṟutal, sacrificing himself for this love of mankind.[133] Here is indeed a flash of original poetic imagination bringing out the underlying idea of crucifixion in terms of a convention of *Akam* poetry.

---

127. P. TML. - couplets 39, 40. cf. *Rg Veda*. X. 95,. 14. practised by Pūruruvas or threatened to be practised by him against Urvasi who pleads with him not to do so, cf. also *Sat Brah*. XI. 5.1: 6-9.

128. C. TML. - Couplets - (66-68).

129. *TLK*. *Porul* - Sūtra. 99 (Ilam); the nine poems in *Narrinai* and *Kuṟuntokai* already referred to.

130. ibid., *Sūtra*. 54. There are ten poems in *Kalittokai* (138-147) relating to this theme. Among them, four poems describe masculine Peruntiṇai and ssx faminine Peruntiṇai. cf. "Woman......has far greater gifts for love than man, that is, taking love in its nobler meaning, for that feeling which fills the whole being, is stead fast and faithful, grows ever deeper, and is strongly mingled with altruistic elements" (Meyer: *Sexual Life in Ancieni India*, p. 277).

131. Tttuvarāyar: *Kali Maṭal.*

132. *Varuṇakulātittaṉ Ulā Matal.*

133. *Iratcaṉīya yāttirīkam.*

In both the *Maṭals*, the Āḷvār posits that out of the four-fold goals or *summum bonum* of life viz., *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mōkṣa*, *kāma* alone is the true goal of the human endeavour that a knowing person ought to desire for; he even makes fun of the states attained by the votaries of the other three goals as they are utterly unverifiable and shifty.[134] The hankering of modern mind to fulfil itself here and now, without waiting to go to regions beyond and in times to come, is very well reflected in these two poems. Indeed, if the story of the Āḷvār prior to his conversion is to be considered in this context, it is clear that he had loved his beloved deeply and wholly He was prepared to dare to do any thing for the sake of his object of adoration. Not to have loved at all is one of the things he could hardly put up with. In the *Maṭals* he just transfers his affection from his dear wife who had been his teacher too in one sense,[135] to the Lord Nārāyaṇa. These two beautiful poems are, in short, merely dramatization of the acute psychosis set up by his faith in absolute self-surrender to the Lord.

* * * * * *

In the poems of this Āḷvār the hills[136] and rivers[137] get a pictureseque description. The groves, fields and the humming of the bees with the sprightly fishes jumping from one rivulet to the adjacent water-way[138] add to the attractiveness of the shrines which are dealt with by the Āḷvār. The recitation of the *Vedas*, the training which the learned brahmins had in the *Vedāṅgas* and the holy rituals which were undertaken by them tend to glorify the religious atmosphere in which the deities in some shrines are described.[139] Apart from the religious fervour which actuated this Āḷvār to undertake a pilgrimage, the beauties of nature did not fail to attract the

134. *P.TML.* Couplets (10–37),
135. It was she (Kumutavalli) who directed the Āḷvār's affection in religion to the Object Adorable, Nārāyaṇā.
136. Peri. Tm; 1.2; 1.7; 2.1.
137. ibid. 1.4.
138. ibid. 2.10; 3.1, 4, 8, 9, 10; 4.10; 5. 2, 3, 4; 9.8.
139. ibid. 3.4: 1; 3.5: 6; 4.2: 2; 5.1: 8; 7.5: 1: 9.7: 10.

Āḻvār which, unlike as in the case of nature poets who had given themlelves to epic glorification, were meaningful to this Āḻvār only when they were presented in the association of the Lord.

PERIYĀḺVĀR

PERIYĀḺVĀR TIRUMOḺI: Viṣṇu-cittaṉ whose surname, or rather title is Periyāḻvār[140]-the Great Āḻvār (Elder Saint)- is the author of *Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi* consisting of 463 verses in eight types of metres.[141] The first Tirumoḻi is known as *Tiruppallāṇṭu.*[142] There is a Vaiṣṇavite traditional story about the birth of this decad. Pāṇṭiya king was so pleased with the exposition by this Āḻvār of the superiority of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Deity and of the greatness of Śrī Vaiṣṇava *Siddānta* as a philosophy of religion that he honoured him in the right royal style and arranged for a procession through the streets of Maturai for Viṣṇu-cittaṉ seated on an elephant. As if to enjoy the unique honour done to His devotee, the Lord Himself seated on His vehicle Garuḍa appeared with all His beauty, majesty and glory. Viṣṇu-cittaṉ witnessed Him and felt the magnanimity with which the Lord was possessed, as a result of which He gave *darśana* to him and to the large concourse of people thronging in the streets. In a trice he forgot His greatness, supremacy and prowess about which he had discoursed so eloquently in the polemic held in the king's court a little while ago. A great fear seized him that some evil eye (Kaṇ eccil) may be cast

140 There is a vaiṣṇavite tradition about this title to this Āḻvār. No Āḻvār before or after him sang the song of long life (Tiruppallāṇṭu) to God and for the enduring kingdom of God and Glory on earth. This is one of the two reasons why Viṣṇu-cittaṉ is called Periyāḻvār (U.R.M. 18). The other reason is that the Āḻvār was given the opportunity of offering to the Lord the garland worn by Āṇṭāl. He got the reputation of having become great (mahattara) which he could not got by singing in praise of the Lord (Gōdaśtuti 10).

141. aṟucīr āciriya viruttam, eḻucīr āciriya viruttam, eṇcīr āciriya viruttam, cantakkali viruttam, kali viruttam, kalittāḻicai, kali-nilaitturai and kuṟaḷ veṇceṉturai.

142. A discussion about the nature of its composition is included in the previous chapter

on Him and his beauty, to the right of which human eyes are not accustomed, and that some evil may befall Him on its account. At once he burst into song praying for, or rather blessing Him with, long life (eternal years) and every prosperity. This is *Tiruppallāṇṭu.*[143] Such a mental frame and such a song can only be the outcome of overwhelming love towards God, so overwhelming that it makes one forget His great power and reduces Him to the state of an object of protection, though in truth and fact He is the protector of the world.[144]

Periyāḷvār is the poet of the divine child. His love towards God is peculiar. It is one of a father to a son, of a mother to her darling and there is appropriateness in his wishing God "eternal years". That love had converted him into Yacōtai and made him enjoy the pleasures and ecstasies of maternal love towards Lord Kṛṣṇa. Barring the first *Tirumoḻi*, a major portion of this *Prabandha* deals with the child-life of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is from the second decad of his first *Tirumoḻi* that the Āḻvār sings, perhaps as His loving mother in all the details of a child's life in the nursery, where the background is mythological. Beginning with the birth of Kṛṣṇa in the second decad of the first *Tirumoḻi* the Āḻvār goes on in the succeeding decads to describe His beauty,[145] to put Him in the cradle and sing lullaby to Him,[146] and call Him with extended hands to toddle towards him[147] and clasp His hands,[148] to invite Him to come and bathe and to wear

---

143. This reminds us at once of Cēntaṉār's *Tiruppallāṇṭu* in the ninth *Tiumurai* of the Saivites.

144. Such a blessing in Vaiṣṇavite parlance is called *Maṅgalāśāsanam* or wishing for, desiring, and praying for *maṅgalam* or auspiciousness (welfare). *Āśīrvādam* (blessing) is what a superior or elderly person utters or invokes in regard to one inferior or younger; when an inferior invokes the welfare of the superior person, generally and only God, it is called *Maṅgalāśāsanam.*

145. Periyal. Tm. 1.2.

146. ibid. 1.3.

147. ibid. 1.4; 1.5; 1.7; 1.8.

148. ibid. 1.6.

flowers[149] and so on.[150] It is therefore that the commentator Periyavāccān Pillai has fittingly said that Lord Kṛṣṇa who resides in the Āḷvār's heart heard the story of His birth and growth narrated by him.[151] It is said by learned Tamil scholars that the germs of the *Piḷḷai-t-tamiḻ* type of poetry singing the childhood of any hero or God, has been first laid down by this Āḷvār.[152] As the trammels of conventionalised poetry are not seen in this Āḷvār, he may be looked upon as the originator of this new kind of poetry.[153] It is only from the fourth *Tirumoḻi* onwards the Āḷvār deals with the sacred shrines.

Several of the sentiments voiced forth by this Āḷvār in his *Prabandha* show the intensity and sincerity of his devotion towards God. He counts among his hungry days not those days on which he starves, but those on which he does not resort to the Lord with the flowers culled from the *Vedas*.[154] He advises people to name their children with the names of the Lord so that when calling them they will be necessarily uttering the names of the Lord and thereby unwittingly earning the merit of having repeated the Lord's names.[155] To Lord Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Tiruvaraṅkam, he pays his humble obeisance even now – a prayer made in advance – so that He may come and protect him during his last moments when he may in all probability be unable to think or talk.[156] He winds up his *Prabandha* by exultingly speaking the infinite mercy of the Lord to save his soul of how the Lord has taken His seat within him and how fondly He has come and

149. ibid. 2.4; 2.7.

150. cf. *Periyāḷvār Tirumoḻi* 1.2 to 3.6 with the early portion of the *Daśāmaskandha* (Tenth canto) of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* dealing with Kṛṣṇa's birth, infancy and boyhood.

151. Commentāry to the hymn. Periyal. Tm. 5.4: 11 (last stanza).

152. *A History of Tamil Literature*. p. 78. For a full discussion vide ibid., pp. 144-146.

153. The influence of this Āḷvār can be seen in Vallabhācārya's worship of Bālakṛṣṇa.

154. Periyal. Tm. 5.1 : 6.

155. ibid. 4.6.

156. ibid. 4.10.

settled in his heart after rejecting and renouncing His glorious bed in the midst of the cool ocean and his soft couch on Ādiśēṣa[157] There is one verse here which shows the appropriateness of his having been named Viṣṇu-cittaṉ.[158] His powerful description of Gaṅgā descending from the top of the Himālayas with unprecedented force reminds us of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār who describes things of that sort with poetic elegance and grandeur.[159] There is another verse which gives the quintessence of philosophy.[160]

Though the poetry of this Āḷvār is of a high order, it is his language that arrests our attention. He avoids the learned style and uses colloquialisms, mostly brahminical, of his age. A proverb 'paṇṭaṉṟu paṭṭinam kāppu', very much in vogue during his time is found in a whole decad.[161] The Āḷvār introduces certain stories of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma which must have been current in the Tamil country as for example the story of Cīmālikaṉ[162] and the incident of Rāma being bound by Sītā with a jasmine garland[163] which have not been mentioned by Vyāsa, Śukā or Vālmīki. There is an element of bridal mysticism in two decads.[164]

---

157. ibid. 5.4: 9, 10. cf. 5.2: 10.

158. ibid. 5.4, 5. cf. 5. 4: 7, 9.

159 ibid. 4.7: 4, 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 1. 4.

160. ibid. 4.7: 10 where there is a play on the number Three as we find in the poem of Bhaktisāra.

161. ibid. 5.2. This *Tirumoḷi* can be compared with a verse in Piḷḷapperumāḷ Ayyengar's poem *Tiruvaraṅkattumālai* (st. 102). Here 'paṭṭinam' stands for the individual soul. The implication is that the soul is not in its previous state; it is now fortified by Him.

162. ibid. 2.7: 8. (vide Appendix. III).

163. ibid. 3. 10: 2. Perhaps the Āḷvār is influenced by the incident narrated about this Diṅnāga's *Kundamālā*. In this hymn Hanumāṉ refers to certain episodes known only to Sītā and Rāma in order to prove that he is the accredited messenger from Rāma. Kampaṉ utilises these and elaborates them in the scene where Hanumāṉ meets Sītā in the Aśoka vaṉam. (K.R. Cuntara Kāṇṭam. 4: 60–62).

164. ibid. 3.7; 3.8.

It is interesting to note that Periyāḷvār's life and philosophy has so attracted Kṛṣṇadēva Rāya, the emperor of Vijayanagar that he wrote a beautiful *kāvya, Āmuktamālyadā* or *Viṣṇu-Cittiva*, one of the five great *Kāvyas* in Telugu. This *kāvya* deals with the life of the Āḷvār, his exposition of Vaiṣṇavism and the love between his foster-daughter Āṇṭāḷ and the Lord Raṅganātha. The style of this work which marks the beginning of the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on Telugu literature is involved and complex, the similes are sometimes far-fetched, but all the same the effect achieved is majestic and sublime.[165]

Periyāḷvār is known also as the author of the *Kalpasūtra*.[166] Neither the name of the work nor the work is extant. Vedānta Dēsika cites the passage from *Periyāḷvār's Tirumoḷi* and justifies the contents of it.[167] The Āḷvār means that those who recite the names of God have a right to purchase him. The implication is that He is the seṣa of the devotees of God. The relationship of the principal (śēṣin) and the secondary (śēṣa) and the nature of purchasing and selling are all dealt with the *śrauta* section of the *Kalpasūtras*. Periyāḷvār, who commented on these *sūtras*, must be quite familiar with the question of purchasing and the conditions governing it and so is this passage cited by Vedānta Dēsika.

ĀṆṬĀḶ

Āṇṭāḷ the only faminine mystic in the galaxy of Āḷvārs has left two poems viz., *Tiruppāvai* and *Nāccivar Tirumoḷi.*

TIRUPPĀVAI : This beautiful small piece of work consisting of 30 verses in iyal taravinai-k-koccakak-kalippā metre is a well-known spiritual Tamil lyric and a pastoral poem of a very high order. It is a spiritual song of songs for the Divine Enchanter of Bṛndāvan. 'Tiruppāvai' means a sacred girl, a divine girl, and therefore, is likely to indicate Āṇṭāḷ herself. Her work also is *Tiruppāvai* which is so called

165. *A History of South India* (1966),, p. 412.
166. *Rahasyatrayasāra - Puruṣārtha kāṣthādhikāra.*
167. Periyal. Tm. 4.4: 10.

because it relates to the observance of a Pāvai or Nōṉpu.[168] In fact, all the verses excepting the thirtieth end with 'Elorempāvai' and the thirtieth ends with 'Empāvāi' *simpliciter*. One of the several meanings, perhaps the correct one in the context, attributed to this refrain is based upon the meaning 'Nōṉpu' for the word 'Pāvai'.

The poem has its genesis in Āṇṭāl's love of Kṛṣṇa. The scene and setting of *Tiruppāvai* conforms to the archetype of gōpi-love to the Divine cowherd boy who as māyōṉ captured their souls by His bewitching beauty. Āṇṭāḷ's poetic soul–the māke-believe element in her–helped her convert herself into a gopī and with this frame of mind she starts singing *Tiruppāvai*. She visualised a congregational procession with her companions aroused from sleep to the mansion of the Sleeping Beauty to wake Him up and pray for the boon of *paṟai* or drum (which is a symbol or token of His inescapable love) to be received from Him. The poem is held to be marked by five divisions representing (i) the purpose of their observance of the nōṉpu;[169] (ii) awakening the maidens, the companions of Āṇṭāḷ from their sleep, and calling them to participate in the observance of the nōṉpu,[170] (iii) awakening the persons in the mansion of the Lord beginning from the gate-keeper and ending with Nappiṉṉai[171] (iv) arousing the Sleeping Beauty and making their representations to Him[172] and (v) the fruits of their observance of the nōṉpu.[173] The situations connected with these descriptions are depicted graphically and with meticulous care to mark the steps that precede the situations at dawn.[174] The folk–song motif prevalent in those

168. This has been mentioned in *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* 10th canto, 22nd chapter. There is also reference in *Paripāṭal* – 11 to this nōṉpu. The nōṉpu has been observed in the Tamiḷ Nāṭu in some form in the month of Mārkaḷi (December-January) and the 'Ātirai Tirunāḷ' being celebrated in the same month in Kerala signifies this nōṉpu.

169. T.Pv. (1-5).

170. ibid. (6–15).

171. ibid. (16–18).

172. ibid. (19–25)

173. ibid. (26–30).

174. ibid. (6-8).

times has been taken by Āṇṭāḷ and handled with exquisite skill and masterly technique to give expression to the external longing of the human heart for the love of God. The prayer is for the love of God with whom our relation is eternal and everlasting. The prayer is for service, for *kaiṅkarya* and is for the removal of all other desires. The poem *Tiruppavai* is noted for its poetic beauty and philosophic suggestiveness.[175] Among the Vaiṣṇavites it is regarded as an *Upaniṣad* as it contains the quintessence of Visiṣṭādvaita philosophy and Śrī Vaiṣṇavite tradition.

In sheer poetic quality, Āṇṭāḷ is not below the very best of poets. The range of her experience is strictly limited; but the elusive charm and the penetrating sweetness of her tone, which she maintains throughout, is what even the most fastidious of critics might well appreciate. Hers is a truly feminine genius, and for that reason stands by itself in Tamil literature.

An element of *svāpadeśa* or inner, allegorical meaning, is traced to some of the verses of *Tiruppāvai*. For instance, the verses from 6 to 15 are interpreted as each directed towards the awakening from sleep of one of the ten Āḻvārs - Periyāḻvār,[176] Kulacēkarāḻvār,[177] Nammāḻvār,[178] Tirumalicaiyāḻvār,[179] Pēyāḻvār,[180] Pūtattāḻvār,[181] Poykaiyāḻvār[182] Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḻvār,[183] Tiruppāṇāḻvār,[184] and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār.[185] Likewise the same songs are explicated as rousing the Bhāgavatas from sleep. Such allegorizing and reading into lines of meanings are far-fetched and strained and speak

---

175. missing

176. T.Pv.6.
177. ibid. 7.
178. ibid. 8.
179. ibid. 9.
180. ibid. 10.
181. ibid. 11.
182. ibid. 12.
183. ibid. 13.
184. ibid. 14.
185. ibid. 15.

more of the overingenuity of the commentators than of the actual meaning of the verses.

NĀCCIYĀR TIRUMOḺI: This poem of Āṇṭāḷ consists of 143 verses in five types of metres[186] and they have been grouped in fourteen decads. In this poem, Āṇṭāḷ pours out her burning passion for union with Lord Kṛṣṇa. When there is no response to the message of love sent by her, she pines away in gloom. Then she invokes the aid of Manmatha for her union with the Lord. She describes the ritual of a penance, and a worship and a prayer to that God.[187] But even the seductions of Manmatha's shafts have no power over the Ravisher of souls. There is a description of a dream in which the love-sick maiden goes through the ritual of a marriage with Kṛṣṇa - a marriage as conducted in ~~the~~ those days.[188] In other hymns one gets the neytal theme - the song of despair, full of love and pathos.[189] There is a request to the cuckoo to cry welcome to her Lord;[190] and a group of ten verses sending a massage through the clouds to Him.[191] A decad of verses deals with a mystic circle (kūṭal) by which Āṇṭāḷ tries her success in attaining the Lord.[192] The poem is an excellent piece of work which has set a standard in erotic

186. aṟucīr āciriya viruttam, elucīr āciriya viruttam, kāli viruttam, kalinilaittūṟai and koccakakkalippā.

187. Nac. Tm. 1. A question may be posed whether it would be proper on the part of a true Vaiṣṇavite to worship other deities than Viṣṇu and the answer is, such means namely invoking other deities is approved since efforts are taken owing to intense longing for attaining the justifiable end, namely, Kṛṣṇa and further in bridal mysticism such efforts as taking Maṭal, or the observance of a *vṛata* etc., are approved, because they have been resorted to in order to please God.

188. ibid. 6.

189. ibid. 10.

190. ibid. 5.

191. ibid. 8.

192. ibid. 4. This is an omen-circle drawn by a lady - love on sand closing her eyes so that the line drawn by the hand completes the circle correctly. Or else concentric circles are drawn and then these are counted. If they are an odd number, success is not predicted; if even, success is assured. cf. Nāṉ. Tv. 39.

literature. Addressed to God, this eroticism is as pure as it is intense. At one stage Āṇṭāḷ's passivity gives way to aggressive love and in the frenzy of fierce love, she assaults the Lord by attempting to pluck out the very roots of love budding from the bosom and aim them at the Torturer so that His heart may be pierced by the wounds of unrequited love.[193] Kṛṣṇa has had several abuses hurled at Him – by His parents when He was mischievous, by His playmates when He was exceptionally teasing, and by His consorts in later life whenever they are in suspicion of His fidelity towards them. But the epithets that Āṇṭāḷ uses to depict and describe Him stand on a class apart. She calls Him one who tells white lies,[194] a mischief monger who is ignorant of *dharma*,[195] one who never knows how to say 'Don't fear'[196] in short, one who is as black in the interior as He is in the exterior, black of heart and black of body – a black God in his exterior and a Blackguard in His interior[197] and a shameless one with a double tongue like His snake Ādiśēṣa,[198] terms which ought to make even Him blush with shame and remorse.

Both in her poems and in her father's the cycle of Kṛṣṇa stories is most effectively used to rouse the devotion of the hearer, and to a Hindu the repeated allusions to the tales in different settings constitute not the least attractive feature of her work. The hymn '*vāraṇāmāyiram*'[199] telling of her dream-marriage with Lord Viṣṇu is sung at all Vaiṣṇavite marriages of today.

MATURAKAVI ĀḶVĀR

KAṆṆINUṆ CIṞU-T-TĀMPU : This poem of Maturakavi Āḷvār consisting of eleven verses, arranged in Antāti scheme,

193. ibid. 13: 8.
194. ibid. 14: 3.
195. ibid. 14: 6.
196. ibid. 13: 3, 5.
197. ibid. 14: 7.
198. ibid. 10: 3.
199. ibid. 6.

is not on God but on Nammāḷvār, his spiritual guru. The name of the poem is not really a name, but the opening words of the *Prabandha*. To sing of Kurukur Nampi (Nammāḷvār) is sweeter to this Āḷvār than to sing of Lord.[200] In the first five verses the Āḷvār speaks of how he approached and relied on the saint of Kurukūr as his all, and in the second five verses how the *ācārya* functions to secure to the disciple the saving grace of the Lord. The tenth verse is very significant because it shows how the *ācārya* out of his grace towards the disciple corrects his errors and erring ways and makes him a true and loyal servant. In this way Nammāḷvār becomes the first *ācārya*, or the *ācārya* amongst the Vaiṣṇavites[201]. It is considered that these verses of the poem reveal the supreme poetic quality of the Āḷvār. The poem is held in high esteem by all Śrī Vaiṣṇavites and has been ranked on a par with the mystic utterances of the other Āḷvārs exuding God-love. It is therefore prefixed and suffixed to the recitation of Nammaḷvar's *Tiruvāymoḷi* even like the sacred *praṇava* in relation to the ancient Sanskrit *Vedas*.

RĀMĀNUCA-NŪṞṞANTĀTI: Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār rendered services to Lord Raṅganātha in such an exceedingly splendid way that his admirers began calling him Periyakōyil Nampi. His deep erudition in all *śāstras* at a very early stage, the good services which he rendered and the reputation which he enjoyed there turned him conceited with the result that he felt he had no compeer. At the instance of Rāmānuja, his disciple Kūrattāḷvāṉ contacted Periyakōyil Nampi and relieving him of his conceit by training him in the right path brought him to the side of Rāmānuja[202] whose devoted disciple he chose to remain ever after. Rāmānuja's desire to make Periyakōyil Nampi contribute to the greatness of the Āḷvārs yielded the appreciable result through the composition

200. K.C. 1. Vedānta Dēśika has nicely put this as "Maturakavi who freed himself from all sorrow by relying solely on him, who rendered the *Vedas* into Tamil-Saint Saṭhakōpa" (T.P. 41).

201. The spiritual lineage of Rāmānuja is traced back to Nammāḷvār through Periya Nampi, Yāmunācārya (Āḷavantār), Maṇakkāl Nampi, Uyyakkoṇṭār, and Nāthamuni.

202. R.N. 7.

of 108 verses by him in praise of the Āḻvārs, each one containing the word 'Rāmānuja', This work received the approbation of all the learned men of the day and was named '*Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti*'. In point of its grand style rich diction and inner sense no other composition can bear comparison with it. The author was therefore conferred the title 'Amutaṉār' from the Tamil word 'amutam' meaning 'nectar'

This composition of Amutaṉār which is in *Kaṭṭaḷaik-kalitturai* metre glorifies Rāmānuja, in the main, recounting the latter's contribution for Vaiṣṇavism. It is through Rāmānuja, the author feels, that he would get all good things in life here and hereafter. The composition contains realistic depiction of the greatness of each of the Āḻvārs,[203] Rāmānuja,[204] Nāthamuni[205] and Yāmunācārya.[206]

---

203. ibid. 8 to 18.
204. ibid. 19.
205. ibid. 20.
206. ibid. 21.

THE COMPOSITIONS OF ĀLVĀRS (II)

NAMMĀḶVĀR

Nammāḷvār, "Our Āḷvār", the greatest of Āḷvārs who is also known as Māraṉ, Śaṭhakōpa and Parāṅkuśaṉ has given to the world four poems khown as *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, *Periya Tiruvantāti* and *Tiruvāymoḷi* which are supposed to contain the essentials of the four *Vedas* and so equated to them respectively.[1] Like Śuka, he was conceived and born in godliness. With his instinct for the infinite his hunger and thirst were only for God. His divine love was a divine gift and he was immersed in it for sixteen years at the foot of a tamarind tree till he came down to the waking state and gave articulate expression to his infinite *avā* or love in the four soul-stirring poems mentioned above. His is the piercing cry and the inexplicable joy of the heart. All the four poems of this Āḷvār are in the *Antāti* arrangement. More than the works of any other saints, Nammāḷvar's hymns have shaped the conduct and faith of the southern Vaiṣṇavites. Possessing a matchless cadence and simple grandeur, they are characterised equally by their literary charm and by their ethical and spiritual values. To the emotionally inclined, the psalms are simple and appealing prayers to the different forms of Viṣṇu in different sacred places. To the less emotional and more philosophical, they seem to be the outcome of great learning in the *Vedās*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gitā* and the *Bhāgavata* literature. To the practical spiritualist, they are of value as the achievement of one who was in holy communion with God.

TIRUVIRUTTAM: *Tiruviruttam*, the first work of

1. U.R.M., 14.

Nammālvār.[2] which is considered by the orthodox to be the essence of the *Ṛg Veda* (*Ṛg Veda sāra*) consists of a hundred verses in *kaṭṭalāi-k-kalitturai* metre.[3] This metre was in those days called *viruttam* and the name 'viruttam' has been given to this work as to all literary compositions in that metre. The term 'viruttam' applies to this work in another sense too. The poem is a narration of an incident in the life of Nammālvār, a *viruttānta,* and as such the work deserves to be called a 'viruttam'.[4] 'Tiru' is a word in Tamil, like Śrī in Sanskrit, being usually prefixed to any great man or good thing signifying sacredness or auspiciousness as in the case of *Tirukkuṛaḷ.* Hence the name *Tiruviruttam* to this poem. The composition belongs to the faminine approach to the Divine as implied in *Vedic* literature. The Supreme Being is the One *Puruṣa*, the Primal male, all else, gods, men and other creatures are in the relationship of famales, dependents, *aṅgas*, *śaktis* etc.[5] The mysticism of

---

2. T.P., 372.

3. The older metres such as *veṇpā akaval*, and *kali* became longer and longer during the period of Āḷvārs and Nāyaṉmārs. They then came to be called *virnttam* and the name was first applied to *kaṭṭalaik-kalittnṛai* which consists of four lines of five cīrs, and later on was used for denoting all such developments. e.g., Poems of Appar, and those of Paṭṭiṉattup-piḷḷaiyār. Even in the Caṅkam age eompositions were named after the same metre. In some cases the whole of the book is in the same metre. e.g., *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal.*

4. The incident referred to is this: Ever since his birth, Nammāḷvār did not open his eyes. When he was taken to the temple on the twelfth day, he opened his eyes, and the first object he beheld was God's image in the temple and therefore he was a god-man. Again he closed his eyes and was in that state for sixteen years immersed in divine love. The first work of his is this poem which makes an appeal to God to rid him from *saṃsāra.* (The word '*viṇṇappam*' in Tamil means 'appeal'). The tradition that the name of a work describing an incident *(viruttāntam)* is also called as *viruttam* can be known from the name of works such as *Nariviruttam, Kaliviruttam* and *Eliviruttam* most of which are *Jain* works. cf. Campantar's *Tevāram* 3. 39: 5.

5. Ch. Up. 8.12: 5; Taitt. Br. 10. 5? Taitt. Ar. 1.2. cf.*Viṣṇu Dharma* and *Viṣṇusahasranāma Bhāṣya,* name 4.1

other Āḻvārs also is highly coloured by this most significant attitude especially as it is of Āṇṭāḷ, Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ and Kulacēkarar. The faminine approach is what might be made by one who has been entranced by the Beauty of the Divine. The work of this Āḻvār mystic on the basis of this understanding renders the real and supreme nature of God as the most wonderful integration of all the manifold auspicious excellences. It is thus seen in this poem the representation of the supreme attractiveness of the Divine which makes him seek no other company, no other ordainer, no master other than the Divine Lord Himself. It is true that this is impossible for any one who is yet in the outercourt so to speak. The deep intimate and total offering that the Āḻvār wants to make, giving up all his other desires desiring Him as lover and husband is only possible to a soul made feminine. It is further beauty alone, not the outer beauty merely, but that supreme beauty which melts the soul. Not until the soul melts can it ever know how to enter the divine. That is, only aesthetic heat, or intention, can facilitate the union with the Beloved Object.

The poem reveals the reactions of a soul (here Nammāḻvār, as Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki) caught up by the Lord's beauty which from then on it has elected to follow as its one and only supreme object that shall govern the rest of its life. The very first verse shows the soul which already having beheld the beauty of the Divine Lord in His transcending Grace that had made Him descend into manifold wombs so as to relieve the distress of the souls, now seeks to appeal to Him to hearken to its appeals to remove the obstacles to its *brahmānubhava*. The sentiment embodied in this verse is exceptional and unique as no other devotee has started with a plea and a petition (*viṇṇappam*) on behalf of suffering humanity.[6] The Lord is all grace, who could be invoked

6. It is worthy of note that the first word of the first verse of his works stands for false-hood (*poy ninṟajñālam)* and the last word of the last verse stands for exaltation *uyarntē* (T.V.M. 10-10-11). If ever any soul migrated from false-hood to exaltation, it was Nammāḻvār as even the words used by him indicate.

through prayer and who, in spite of it too, is anxious to save all His creatures for which purpose He has taken many descents and forms. So much is the Āḷvār overpowered by the love shown by Him to all His sinning slaves that he surrenders his entire being to Him.

But the vision is obviously short-lived for the verses that follow intimate the feeling of separation. The vision has passed into remembrance. The next group of verses are all intended to demonstrate the growing intensities of the Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki (so the Āḷvār's soul is called) who had but a glimpse of the Divine like a lightning flash in a dark and heavy night. The condition of the love-smitten woman,[7] the blowing of the oppressive northern winds,[8] the oncoming of the rainy season, pseudo[9] as well as real,[10] when the hero would return as promised have all been vividly portrayed. The fever of love is being fanned into white-heat by the nothern winds. The world-life for the Nāyaki without Nāyaka (God) is felt to be oppressive – it now appears to be a vast ocean which is dark, gloomy and serenely indifferent. The most poignant experience then runs with the collapsing feeling. Such is her codition that streams of water are flowing from her deep ocean-eyes.[11] The heart's lord the bridegroom had not arrived. An attempt is made to care for her love-sickness with magic such as that practised by devil-ostraciser and it has become an utter failure. The Nāyaki knows that the cure will prove futile because she knows the causes of her deepening distress and she is also aware of the chasm that separates her from her beloved Adorable Object of Union.[12] Then there comes the gentle breeze gathering the tuḷacī-scent nearing towards her. Now her joy is exceedingly great and intense.[13]

7. TVR. 2.
8. ibid. 4,5, 13, 28, 35, 41.
9. ibid. 7, 18.
10. ibid. 52, 68.
11. ibid. 16, 17, 18.
12. ibid. 20.
13. ibid. 25.

The Nāyaki has an ecstatic feeling but not yet a vision of presence. This makes her a little life-interested. But she is dragged into the divine centre. She yearns for the experience of his presence. She hopes that He does keep up or abide by His promises.[14] She lapses into herself and her loneliness leads to suffering. This second stage reveals her disgust at every other being that has some sort of connection with the Divine. She pleads with swans, herons and even clouds to take her plaint to her beloved Lord.[15] She even laments that outer objects prevented inward growth and total offering.[16] Her own inner voices, friendly to her, feel the callousness and irresponsiveness of the Lord and there is material and self-regarding voice within that even fears that she has entered into a veritable jungle of death.[17] At one stage even tuḷaci which she has considered as Lord's grace which is invigorating and increases her faith in Him has proved like remembrance-transitory ecstasy-food fo memory, for rumination. At another stage she finds every tree, every bush, every could,[18] every blue lily[19] to reveal or recall Lord. Such is the intoxication of the vision, slowing blossoming out of the faith, prayer, longing consecretion, and refusal to have anything to do with material and physical and sensory joys or wants. When searching for the beloved in every place, the Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki is gifted to perceive the Divine in all things, the *viśvarūpa*, the world-divine Love form.[20] Then His eyes welling up with love for all, that beauty of His lotus eyes, that beauty of Form, His superb greatness, are one after another revealed to her, all too deep for expression and overflowing all experience.[21] The stage is

14. This reverberation of the feeling of hope coming to her mind is an *Akam* motif. This kind of suggestion, sometimes occurring in more than one hierarchic layer is called iraicci (Tol. Poruḷ-Sūtras.)
15. ibid. 30, 31.
16. ibid. 32, 38.
17. ibid. 35, 36, 37, 70, cf. v. 19.
18. ibid. 32.
19. ibid. 38.
20. ibid. 39.
21. ibid. 43.

psychically one of ardent expectancy. It would be clear that it is of the intensest quality. Now a soothsayer is sought after to give advice; she has diagnosed her real malady as God-infection.[22] Neither physical malady nor any psychical one is there; the real condition is soul-aspiration. And what she is yearning after is the total personality of God, nothing less can help. She has become thin;[23] her anguished cry is heard indeed, for she begins to hear the voice of the supreme Lord urging the charioteer to drive fast.[24] The Lord's own anxiety to meet and save the soul is great. Now the true rainy season has arrived indeed and the period of union is at last at hand.[25] The Nāyaki likewise has become tearfilled, inconsolable, since none but God could help. Urgency prompts her to send further messengers, this time, the beetles and bees. The significance of messengers of these kinds may be due to the fact that they have closer intimacy with the honey-laden garland of God.[26] Then happens the arrival of Lord not yet in front but intimated by the cool sweet southern breeze.[27]

The third coming is nearer and more intimate than any prior. The Nāyaka's love for the Nāyaki is made manifest by his secret presence that presents an aura of happiness. His passion too is manifestly sincere and reciprocative as a response to the agony of love of the Nāyaki. Faith has deepened; the impossible has now a chance of fulfilment. The Nāyaki has to get her assurance, and perfect assurance that she would be meeting her Nāyaka. The maid comes to her help. It is she who consoles both the Nāyaka and the Nāyaki. She narrates the greatness, goodness, puissance, condescension and other qualities of the Nāyaka and asks her to wait till His arrival.[28] She speaks to the Nāyaka also about the inconsolability and

22. ibid. 53.
23. ibid. 47.
24. ibid. 50.
25. ibid. 52.
26. ibid. 54, 55.
27. ibid. 56.
28. ibid. 58, 61.

utter helplessness of the Nāyaki; she also points out to Him the uninterrupted aspiration or total consecration or offering of her to Him.[29] The Nāyaki refuses to listen to others who say that she has not His grace[30] and finds fullest consolation in reciting constantly His name.[31] Such is she in complete absorption. In the recesses of her being there occur visible changes. The Lord has indeed arrived; her beauty has increassed. It is not the physical beauty now but the beauty that is intrinsic, psychical, inalienable, of knowledge too[32]. She is in the madness of love; she is transforming herself in the passion of her Lord. Everywhere she sees His glory, a hallucination as it were.[33] It is under such conditions of psychical exaltation and complete overwhelming absorption that the tuḷacicool fragrant breeze blows from the direction of the Divine.[34] There is silent grief of being separate from the Lord unlike those who are blessed to be always by His side, inseparably so in worship, work and service, and the present loneliness and evening darknesses are symbolic of the soul's (Nāyaki's) despairs and languishments.[35] But they are no longer of the doubting kind, for absolute fidelity is affirmed.[36] There is impatience and grief which are results indeed only of the separation from the Nāyaka.[37] The whole situation indeed breathes a tense atmosphere of denouement. There is to be a glorious marriage a divine embrace of the soul by its true and inalienable Lord, a superb acceptance of her by the Divine as an eternal companion. The states of consciousness at this high place or altitude of Divine Gnosis are veritable masterpieces of Vision.[38]

---

29. ibid. 62.
30. ibid. 63.
31. ibid. 64.
32. ibid. 74, 75.
33. ibid. 80, 82, 85, 86.
34. ibid. 74.
35. ibid. 77, 78, 79, 80, 86.
36. ibid. 91, 95, 99.
37. ibid. 87, 88, 89, 90.
38. ibid. 96, 97.

Thus the poem is an account of the pilgrimage of the soul to its real Self, of the Nāyaki to her real and eternal Nāyaka, the Lord. Nammāḻvār has shown that one who sees God becomes a woman.[39] Such is the mystic nature and rapture of the soul in relation to the Universal Soul.

TIRUVĀCIRIYAM : This poem, which is stated to be a mystic rendering of the truths of the *Yajur Veda*, is the second work of this Āḻvār and it is the smallest among his works. It consists of seven verses in āciriyappā metre[40] arranged in the Antāti scheme[41] and the poem takes its name of the metre employed. This small poem teaches within the brief compass of seven verses the *tattva* (Nature of Reality), the *hita* (the Means) and the *puruṣārtha* (the Goal of human endeavour) as well as the obstacles to the attainment of that ideal and goal.

In the opening verse the nature of God is explained as the supremely adorable Transcendent Object. God is compared to a mountain in the ocean, the Rock of Ages in the *saṃsāra*; the Tirivikrama-*avatāra* of Viṣṇu, His primeval dwelling place as Nārāyaṇa in the waters of the milk ocean,

---

39 The *Akam* motif found in Caṅkam literature, beautifully systematised in *Tolkāppinm*, has bern excellently handled by this Āḻvār for the divine purpose.

cf. *Bhāgavatam*. V. 5: 15, 16. The motif has received a different treatment. It has been stated that those, who enter the Ilāvarta country where Śiva is worshiping Nārāyaṇa as Sañkarasṇa become women at once, due to a curse. (Perhaps curses by gods or goddesses may be symboiic of good leading to revelation of reality).

40. Verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are Nilaimaṇṭila ācirivappās and 5 and 7 are Nēricai āciriyappās.

41. But in this poem the ending of the last verse is not the beginning of the first one. This along with the fact that the Āḻvar's name is not given in the last verse as he has given in *Tiruvirūttam* and *Tiruvāymoḻi* have led some to think that the poem *Tiruvāciriyam* is not a complete poem and some of the verses might have been lost. But this is not sufficient ground to arrive at such a conclusion as the other poem *Periya Tiruvantāti* also does not have his name. The only possible reason may be that the Āḻvār has not preferred to mention his name in these two works.

His perfect creative *yōga* called *suṣupti* of the transcendent *Prajñā* and that wonderful form the gods ever adore and would like to behold, are all described together. The second verse reveals the Āḷvār's infinite *avā* or desire to worship the lotus feet of the Divine whose sovereignity is so fully established by the three-strided Tirivikrama.[42] The third verse points out that offering oneself to God will involve also the devoted and consecrated service to the devotees of God (*aṭiyārs*) who have realised the truth that their "I" is God alone. But the Āḷvār feels also that not all devotees can equal the one Lord, because their powers are only God-limited since they are God-granted. It is necessary to reach the source. So the supreme ideal is indeed the Supreme alone, who has become the "I" of oneself and of all and the fourth verse therefore points out that it is the refuge at His feet alone that grants supreme felicity. The fifth verse gives a grand description of a *viśvarūpa darśana*, the vision of the World Omnipervasive Form of the Lord which is a tender grace-granting figure[43] and it is to that Supreme Divine that *śaraṇāgati* is to be performed. The sixth verse points out the weaknesses of mankind, its inveterate tendency to choose the evil and not the good means which is God Himself and also the sympathy of the Āḷvār to them.[44] The seventh and final verse makes the stern determination to worship the Supreme Godhead alone for He is the cause, the One Being, constantly reiterated in the earlier verses, who, unaided, creates, sustains, redeems, loves and succours, withdraws and manifests souls and all creation in perfect freedom and perfection.[45] In short, this final verse most conspicuously shows the original total cause of the existences to be Himself.

---

42. cf. Tc. V. 108.

43. The description given in the verse is that of the great exploit of Viṣṇu which, it must be remembered, is nowhere attributed to any other godhead in the *Vedas*. cf. M. Tv. 17.

44. The commentator Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai remarks that the intensity and volume of the Āḷvār's note of sympathy will be sufficient to reach all the worlds wherever such ignorant people are inhabited. Again Cf. TVM. 4. 6: 2, 3, 7 and 8.

45. Cf. M. Tv. 69; Peri. Tm. 11. 6: 2 and 3.

PERIYA TIRUVANTĀTI: This poem consists of eighty seven verses in veṇpā metre (Nēricai veṇpā) and the work is said to be the essence of *Atharvana Veda.* Even though the poem contains eighty seven verses it is called *Periya Tiruvantāti* (Great Tiruvantāti) because its greatness consists in the beauty of its diction and in the beauty of its esoteric meanings. Another reason may also be attributed to its name as the Āḻvār himself says in one verse,[46] rather humorously, that he is greater than God since he has in him the God who is the owner of the two worlds, the celestial and the terrestrial (*ubhaya vibhūtis);* and the work which speaks of the Āḻvār's greatness is called *Periya Tiruvantāti.*

The purpose of the whole poem is to instruct the mind to worship the greatness of God. It is intended to make the mind attain its real status, *śvarūpajñāna* and make it bathe fully in the flowing waters of the Divine goodness, greatness or majesty and love. The Āḻvār begins the poem by expressing his extreme desire to praise the infinite auspicious qualities of God; but he feels his inability to grasp the glory of God. He submits to the Lord how He transcends words and is beyond praise. The tone of apology in particular is noteworthy where he says, "Please do not get angry with us, because we indulge in such love-antics of ours."[47] And he seeks to justify the lapse by referring to the love that impels men to take to praise Him. As he sings in seven more verses[48] this feeling of unworthiness, for worship overtakes him again, and in the next verse[49] he says "Who are we and where is worship of Tirumāl ?" If at all the only persons who can possibly claim to worship Him are the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, and Śiva and Brahmā and concludes "We have to our credit, immense faults." There are other pācu-

46. P: Tv. 75.

47. ibid. 2. The verse uses the plural "we" throughout and not the singular "I". It must be taken for granted that the Āḻvār here sings about the unworthiness of mankind as a whole and not of himself alone.

48. ibid. 3 to 9.

49. ibid. 10.

rams in this poem disclosing a similar frame of mind.[50] At another stage the Āḷvār says that by praising the God's auspicious qualities, all our sins will be washed away.[51] Among the innumerable qualities, *śaulabya*,[52] *vātśalya*[53] *śouśīlya*,[54] have been praised. The attraction of the Lord is great, for He is independent, and He has made several descents which show His inimitable ever ready grace, incomparable, perfect indweller of all creatures. These distinguishing features make us get closer to Him.[55] The nearness to God is only a token of sacrificing our egoism. "By becoming the servants of God, we have become as it were His sacred sandals."[56] Service is sacrifice and once this is made, God becomes nearer and uses us for His divine purposes and thus we become dear to Him The path and way is God.[57] Sacrifice or surrender makes the Divine come close to the soul and destroy all obstacles.[58] He becomes the protector of the soul.[59] The necessity, however, is that the soul should desire Him intensely and devote itself to Him and His service. Indeed He alone is the adorable, worshippable object.[60] Then the Āḷvār describes the process of his absorption.[61] The Lord has become his father, mother and teacher and has established with him every kind of relationship.[62]

The topics once dealt with recur to be treated more than once and present no scheme as in the case of his other

---

50. ibid. 14, 20, 32, 34, 38, 59, 84.
51. ibid. 15, 38.
52. ibid. 36, 37.
53. ibid. 17.
54. ibid. 19.
55. ibid. 24.
56. ibid. 31
57. ibid. 46, 47, 48, 52.
58. ibid. 33.
59. ibid. 36.
60. ibid. 42, 43.
61. ibid. 38, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 60, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 76.
62. ibid. 5, 77.

three works. There are several types of meditation or prayers to the Divine to come closer to the soul and make it His servant. And a superb note presented in one verse appeals to our mind; the realisation of the Lord here on this planet, in this mortal existence, will remove every desire for the most desirable *paramapada*.[63] The Lord indwelling in the heart of the devoted servant and contemplative will make all sins non-existent. In short, the teaching of this poem mainly consists in revealing the most fundamental aspect of the doctrine of Surrender through service to the Divine, which alone makes for the inward realization of the Divine at the very heart of the devotee. The steps for this are devotion, service or servantship, contemplation, indwellingness, intimacy, exaltation and infinitisation or divinisation.

TIRUVĀYMOḺI : This long poem consisting of 1102 verses in nine types of metres[64] arranged in 100 decads which are divided into ten sections known as *'Pattu'*.[65] This work is considered to be the essence of the *Sāma Veda*. The hymns of other Āḻvārs are to the effect that the attainment of Vaikuṇṭha is not to be preferred to the enjoyment obtainable on this earth by loving Him and singing about Him. But Nammāḻvār's God-love is on a level far more exalted and far more intense. It is more an organic craving than a mere mental feeling. It is more or less a consuming passion. It is seen in this poem the hide and seek which the eternal enchanting lover of his heart plays with him, at one moment the joy of the incomparable blessing, at the other the feeling of isolation, the despair of the dark chamber with intermittent glimpses of the love; finally the eternal joy and light of God, to whose presence he is taken with all pomp and grandeur.[66]

63. ibid. 67.

64. Koccakakkalippā, āciriyatturai, kalinilaitturai, vañcitturai, arucīr āciriyaviruttam, eḻucīr āciriyaviruttam, eṇcīr āciriya viruttam, kaliviruttam and vañci viruttam.

65. One *'Pattu'* contains ten decads each decad approximating to 100 verses. Each decad is called a *Tiruvāymoḻi*. Therefore one *'pattu'* will contain ten *Tiruvāymoḻis*. Throughout this thesis the decad is referred to as hymn.

66. TVM. 10. 9.

In between these moods, the Āḷvār addresses the world and directly delivers his message of Love and Hope. He often tries to express the inexpressible, in mystic songs of *Akam* poetry. His is a heart-melting poetry giving us the quintessence of his divine experience. Even in such moods the idea of kuṟaḷ finds a place in his verses;[67] the very line of one kuṟaḷ is embedded in one verse.[68]

The first section of a hundred verses insists on *kaiṅkarya* to God as the chief goal of life.[69] Bhagavān is the Supreme Lord,[70] who is ever adorable, accessible,[71] holy and blissful[72] and the Saviour of all. The second section analyses *kaiṅkarya* in all its aspects, pointing out the obstacles in the way,[73] and concludes that *kaiṅkarya* is only for His satisfaction without any taint of egoism.[74] In the third section, *kaiṅkarya* has an extended meaning as it finds its completion in *Bhāgavata kaiṅkarya* (service to the Lord's devotees or godly men), irrespective of their birth or status.[75] It is the Āḷvār's firm conviction that the intensity of one's devotion to the Lord will be explicit in one's devotion to the Lord's devotees. The fourth centum traces the way in which the obstacles to the divine life like the temptations of *aiśvarya* and *kaivalya*, are surmounted.[76] The Āḷvār makes it clear that the greatest obstacle lying in the path of *kaiṅkarya* is the enjoyment of

---

67. ibid. 5. 3 : 1, 2. cf. kuṟaḷ. 1147.
68. ibid. 5. 3 : 3 cf ibid.
69. ibid. 1. 1 : 1 and 1. 10 : 11.
70. ibid. 1. 1.
71. ibid. 1. 3; 1. 5.
72. ibid. 1. 6; 1. 7.
73. ibid. 2. 3 : 10.
74. ibid., 2.9. There is an anecdote in the *Ītu* according to which when Empār begins his discourse on this Tiruvāymoḻi he used to examine each one in the audience present weed out the undeserving and close and bolt the door signifying perhaps there is none in the world qualified to listen to the *puruṣārtha* which is its purport (vide : *Īṭṭin Tomiḻākkam* Vol. II (Ed. 1952), p. 241.
75. ibid. 3. 7 : 9.
76. ibid. 4.1 : 1, 9, 10.

sense pleasures.[77] The fifth section is justification by the faith that the Lord Himself removes these hindrances. The Lord Himself has shown His feet as the *upāya* by which to have whatever the Āḷvār wishes to have and to avoid whatever he wants to avoid.[78] This part contains the decad on the deity at Kumbakonam which had been the key to Nāthamuni to unearth the whole of *Nālāyiram*.[79] The sixth section is rather the epitome, the sum and substance, of the spiritual experience of the Tamil seers (or Āḷvārs). It is an important stage in the spiritual life of this Āḷvār, who is extolled as the super-*prapanna* of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, as it defines *prapatti* as the only way to God and the whole attitude of devotion is consummated in *prapatti* or self-surrender.[80] But *mukti* or release from the cycle of births and deaths is not yet in sight to the Āḷvār in spite of self-surrender to the Lord and so the Āḷvār portrays his feeling of dejection in the seventh centum. At first the Āḷvār thinks of the cruelty of God in subjecting him to further hardships in the world of *saṃsāra*;[81] but very soon he realises the reason for the delay to *mukti* as perhaps the Lord enjoys his hymns, however imperfect they may be and that is also by His divine grace.[82] The eighth centum is an account of the purificatory value of the Āḷvār's disappointment as it leads to further self-naughting and introversion, and increases the hunger of God.[83] It is seen here the redemptive love of God who is drawn by love and dwells for ever in the heart of devotees with a view to saving them from sin.[84] In the ninth centum the Āḷvār's feeling of dejection is soon transfigured into hope and it makes love an irrepressible longing.[85] It is shown here God as the eternal friend and

---

77. ibid. 4.9. 10. cf. Kuraḷ-1121. cf. also TVM. 7.1.
78. ibid. 5.7. 10.
79. ibid. 5.8.
80. ibid. 6.10: 10.
81. ibid. 7.1.
82. ibid. 7.9.
83 ibid. 8.1; 8.3; 8.4; 8.5.
84 ibid. 8.6; 8.7.
85. ibid. 9.3; 9.4; 9.10.

companion to the *mumukṣu.*[86] The tenth and last section marks the completion of the spiritual progress of the Āḷvār.[87] It gives a glowing account of his glorious ascent to *Vaikuṇṭha*, his divine abode and thus the attainment by him of the eternal bliss of Brahman having its fruition in *kaiṅkarya.*[88] Here God is shown seeking the Āḷvār more than he seeks God,[89] and so He can be called aptly the "Hound of Heaven."

* * * * * *

The descriptions of the shrines whose praises the Āḷvār has sung here contain the representation of the intense passion for the Lord in the ideal setting of the beauteous natural scene. The hills, thick with forests and marked by the presence of the beasts, get a vivid description.[90] The surroundings of some shrines breathe the aroma of the fragrant offerings made in the sacred fires, revealing an atmosphere of Vedic study.[91] The sprightly movements of the fish in the adjoining fields of certain shrines add to the attractiveness of the places testifying to the peace and plenty reigning these as a gift from the particular deity to the local inhabitants for which act of grace they remain ever grateful to Him.[92]

GENERAL PURPORT OF THE HYMNS: The hymns of the Āḷvārs, without any exception, hold that Nārāyaṇa as the supreme Lord, the inner Controller of all beings; He is also the Creator of the Universe. The efficacy of *Mūlamantra* has been stated by the Āḷvārs in unequivocal terms in their poems. The poems of the Āḷvārs deal extensively with the enjoyment

---

86. ibid. 9.1; 9.2; 9.4; 9.10.
87. ibid. 10.1; 10.2; 10.4; 10.6; 10.7; 10.8.
88. ibid. 10.9; 10.10.
89. This trend is seen from the hymn 10.6 to the hymn 10.10. Nampiḷḷai, the author of *Thirty-six Thousand* when he begins his commentary to the hymn 10.6 refers to this trend: "We see the Āḷvār pursuing God from the first verse of *Tiruviruttam* up to this hymn; and from this onwards God's pursuit of the Āḷvār is noted" (*Īṭṭin Tamiḷākkam*, Vol. X., p. 183).
90. TVM. 2.10; 3.3; 10.8.
91. ibid. 5.7; 7.3; 8.6.
92. ibid. 5.9; 6.1; 7.3; 7.10; 8.4; 8.9; 9.2; 9.6; 9.7; 9.8; 9.10; 10.1; 10.2; 10.6.

of *arcā* form of God in several sacred spots. In all, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār has sung about 86 out of 108 *Divya Dēśas;* and Toṇṭaraṭipoṭiyāḻvār has sung only one, and that is Tiruvaraṅkam; and Tiruppāṇāḻvār has sung Tiruvaraṅkam and Vēṅkaṭam. Other Āḻvārs have sung a considerable number in their praise. Again the Āḻvārs refer to innumerable auspicious qualities of the Lord and revel in them especially *kṛpā*, *śaulabhya* and *sauśīlya*, and so many *avatāras* which are the concrete manifestations of *kṛpā* and its periodic invasion into all species when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life figure in their poems. Even mythology becomes real and vivid to these imaginativc poets; and the stories based on mythology are told with a grasp of their essential message. The stories - sometimes cruel and wild - become revelations of only the love of the Lord to the suffering *jīvas*. It may, in this connection, be pointed out that the novelty, superiority and popularity of the hymnal literatute of the Āḻvārs in Tamil is due to the happy blending of spiritual love with the literary form of human love.[93]

93. *Tiruvaḷḷuvar Nūlnayam*, p. 86; *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*. p. 275.

VAISNAVITE RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE NĀLĀYIRAM

SUMMARY

This section forms the main part of this thesis wherein the aspects of religion and philosophy of the Āḻvārs, especially that of Nammāḻvār, are fully discussed. The already existent concepts of Vaiṣṇavism paved the way for the Āḻvārs for the formulation of Vaiṣṇavite theism, though not as a system of thought Nammāḻvār recognizes the *Upaniṣadic* concept of Brahman and the one accepted in theology as a personal deity and identifies Him as Nārāyaṇa with Śrī in his poems. His complexion and other individualistic traits are shown to arrest the mind of the devotees.

The Lord's attributes which lie beyond human comprehension are *satyam, jñānam,* and *anantam.* These are the chief attributes which form the basis for the admission of countless qualities. Bliss (*ānanda*) is an important attribute of the Lord which produces delectable experience in His devotees. Among His many auspicious qualities, *saulabhya, sauśīlya, vātsalya, dayā* have much attraction for the Āḻvārs. The five forms of God, the transcendent, the grouped, the divinely descended, the immanent and the idol forms mentioned in the

Āgamas are accepted by the Āḻvārs and they express their experience of such forms in their utterances. God in the transcendental state possesses the super-essential qualities of *satyam, jñānam, anantam, amalam* and *ānandam.* In the grouped form the Lord manifests Himself as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The *avatāras* of God takes place (*Vibhava* form) when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life. There are frequent references to such *avatāras* as Varāha, Vāmana, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The fourth state of God, *antaryāmin,* makes the souls pulsate with their creative life and participate in their inner joy and make the mortal selves immortal. The fifth state is the idol which is the reservoir of redemptive mercy. In fact, the poems of the Āḻvārs are the treasure of their experience of this form. Nammāḻvār in one hymn of ten verses stresses the easy accessibility of *arcā.* It has also been pointed out that the Āḻvārs revel in the exploits of Nārāyaṇa both in the *para* and *vibhava* states and these saints have frescoed them in their hearts, so to say.

The nature of self is clearly realized by the Āḻvārs, particularly by Nammāḻvār; but they have not employed the classification of selves as *nitya, mukta* and *bhaddha* Nārāyaṇa is the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. A number of verses in *Tiruvāymoḻi* refer to the involutionary and evolutionary processes of the Universe. The inter-relations of God, self and the world have been explained on the basis of *karma.* Īśvara as the *sarīrin* of all is clearly intuited by these saints and He is considered as having endless glories or posses-

sions. The *lālā-vibhūti* exists for His sport and *nityavibhūti* is time as eternity.

The Āḻvārs have a strong faith that the Lord's grace alone could lead us to emancipation. They dived deep in the ocean of His auspicious qualities through their love they had for Him. To them God's *dayā* is more attractive; He is *dayānidhi* to them. In the act of operation of God's grace, the office performed by Lakṣmī is unique and significant. The Āḻvārs lay emphasis on God-love. This God-love or '*avā*' is seen to have been mentioned in their poems. To Nammāḻvār God is the food he eats, the water he drinks and the betel he chews. The Āḻvārs in general could not give up the great joy, the ecstasy, they were having by their communion with Him as is seen from their poems and references to this aspect are countless. In their ecstasy of their mystic experience, pain and delight take their positions alternately. The apparent contradictions of the world proclaim only with a loud note that He cannot be comprehended by man. The god-experience is called '*amutu*' by the Āḻvārs. To Nammāḻvār is "*Ellām Kaṇṇāṉ*."

The Āḻvārs are Nature mystics. The basis of soul and Nature is God who is described under various names by different thinkers. Nature, according to the Āḻvārs, is the theatre of the Divine *līlā* of Love and the Lord wears the garment of nature and plays with the finite self till the two are united. To them the universe of *cit* and *acit* has its unity only in God. It is the creative expression of the divine sports of love. The intense love of the mystic

for God has one fundamental characteristic feature, namely, he chooses to be quite submissive to the Lord and is passive. Whether man or woman, the mystic has much of the nature of woman. The mystic passes through several stages which a bride undergoes in the periods of wedding-day and honey-moon. The view that God is the bridegroom and the devout soul of the devotees, the bride is an allegorical expression of the intimate communion between the soul and God. This aspect of bridal mysticism is seen in abundance in the poems of the Āḻvārs especially those of Āṇṭāl, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār. So they give expression to their mystic feeling in the language of love and in this mode they have adopted the technique of love poetry. In explaining the bridal mysticism it has been shown that *Bhagavat-kāma* is different from *viṣaya-kāma*. All the technical aspects of *Akattiṇai* are successfully pressed into service by the Āḻvārs in their portrayal of love indicating thereby that bridal mysticism is only a mental process which transports the mystics of either sex to a plane above the physical one and that it is a masterly device selected by a poet-devotee to give vent to his feelings of passion and love for God.

The intense kind of God-experience or communion does not last long. It is a gift from God and the devotee is to remain only waiting for receiving it. Being aware of his inability to work for it, he feels the imperative need for prayer to get His grace. The primary requisite for undertaking the act of worship is the purity of instrument (*karaṇa*). It has been shown that this worship can be per-

formed by body, speech and mind and this worship is referred to by the Āḻvārs as *'pūcai'* or *'pūcaṉai'*. By worship one can get rid of his mental impurities. Different kinds of prayers are indicated here; several modes of *bhakti* are pointed out. Acts of workship, whatever form they take are reducible to the level of service (*kaiṅkarya*). It has been shown that *kaiṅkarya* can be undertaken to God in any of His forms and since the *para*, *vyūha* and *antaryāmin* are not within the easy reach of the mortals, the Vaiṣṇavite school has preferred to enjoin service to the deity in the *arcā* forms.

The cult of *bhāgavatas* is an important aspect in the Vaiṣṇavite religion. Many of the Āḻvārs express their desire of being the God's devotees. It has been shown that the devotees of Viṣṇu had their existence even in the days of *Tolkāppiyam*. In Vaiṣṇavism the cult of *bhāgavata* worship is considered greater than the worship of the Lord Himself according to ancient texts. The Lord is immensely pleased at the service rendered to the devotees who are His very self. Maturakaviyāḻvār is the best instance of a devotee of Lord's devotee. Nammāḻvār likes to have the company of the devotees of the Lord even in the state of release. It has been shown here that the celebration of festivals and observances of the sacred days play an appreciable role in the *bhāgavata* cult and that the poems of the Āḻvārs refer to the occasions of festivals connected with temples.

The ultimate goal of the religious philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism is *mokṣa* which is the state of the release of the soul from bondage to *karma*. Nam-

māḻvār conceives *mokṣa* as the God's abode and also a place of free souls who are real immortals and refers to this place as "*tuyar illā vīṭu*". It has been shown that the two concepts '*celkati*' and '*mākkati*' in combination may be interpreted to mean the straight and shining path of *arcirāti gati* as mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*. The means of salvation as suggested in this faith is devotion and self-surrender. The spiritual experience of the Āḻvārs is epitomised in the *saraṇāgati* of Nammāḻvār. Almost all the Āḻvārs speak of their self-surrender to the Lord. That the purports of three secrets, *mūla-mantra*, *dvayamantra* and *caramaśloka* contain the essentials of *Vedānta* have been explained here and also shown that the *mantras* reveal the role of divine grace in the play of God seeking man and man seeking God. The implication of the concept of Godhead as Nārāyaṇa with Śrī has been brought out The soul's ascent to the Absolute as visualised by Nammāḻvār and the welcome offered to it in *Paramapada* are indicated.

It has been shown that the teachings of the other Āḻvārs are similar to what Nammāḻvār contributed. But they have tried their hands in employing several forms of compositions. The first three Āḻvārs have respectively *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *parama bhakti* all to almost the same degree, but their compositions reveal that each one of these is prominent in the work of each one of them. Intense meditation on the nature of reality made Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār realize the truth about Godhead. The *Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucci* of Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḻvār is a fine pastoral poem which is intended to awaken the Lord

in the early hours of the morning. The other work is *Tirumālai* (Sacred Garland) which name was given to it on an analogy to his service of rearing a flower garden and wreathing the flowers into garlands for the Lord which was considered great by him. In these verses he advises people to utter the name of God by citing his own painful experiences with women. Kulacēkarāḻvār's passionate longing to worship the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam, his keen desire in having the company of the *bhāgavatas* while worshipping the deity, his intense longing to be reborn in Tirumalai hills in any capacity, his representing of his absolute dependence of God for protection and the apt analogies to illustrate this aspect show the intense devotion of the Āḻvār. His depiction of the love which the cowherdesses had for Kṛṣṇa his depiction of motherly feeling in the person of Devaki and the fatherly affection in the person of Daśaratha are marked by their naturalness and direct appeal to our feeling. Tiruppāṇāḻvār's *Amalaṉātipirāṉ* is unique for its intense relegious feeling and gives a very graphic description of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam

Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār is the only Āḻvār who successfully tried his hand at various forms of compositions in wide varieties of metres. His two *Maṭals* are a unique contribution to the *Akam* poetry and to the history of bridal mysticism. Among other Āḻvārs he has shown greater attention to the description of Nature. Many folk-song motifs are successfully handled by this saint. The cardinal tenets of the Viśiṣṭādvaite system find their support in the poems of this Āḻvār. Periyāḻvār is noted for his

maṅgalāsāsanam to the Lord by wishing well of God and praying for His well-being. He is also marked for his depiction of Kṛṣṇa's childhood in a variety of situations so beautifully as to lead the scholars think that he is the founder of Piḷḷai-t-tamiḻ type of literature. Āṇṭāl's two poems *Tiruppāvai* and *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* are, from the point of view of bridal mysticism, inspired lyrical rhapsodies which are the quintessence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpremeditated but self-concealed art. The first teaches people of their utter dependence upon God and of the need to serve Him. The Vaiṣṇavite tradition has attached great significance to *Tiruppallāṇṭu* of Periyāḻvār and to the *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ in the daily worship both in the houses and in the temples and in fact both these saints, father and daughter, have come to occupy supreme position in the recitation of the *Nālāyiram*. The decad "*vāraṇamāyiram*" of the *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* is now recited on the occasion of the marriage in the Vaiṣṇavite families.

Maturakaviyāḻvār's *Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu* which is to be sung before the recitation of *Tiruvāymoḻi* is undertaken because of his sincere devotion to his preceptor Nammāḻvār. Amutaṉār's *Rāmānucanūṟṟantāti* is another poem praising the greatness of the preceptor Rāmānuja by his pupil. It is said that the teachings of Nammāḻvār were ever in the mind of Rāmānuja and guided him in writing his philosophical works. Throughout this chapter it has been stressed that the Āḻvārs are mainly instrumental for the popularisation of the *arcā* form of worship.

Whenever the worldly attractions were irresistible the Āḻvārs prayed to God for saving them from getting entrapped by the senses. Occasionally they offer a bit of advice also to humanity. Nammāḻvār starts singing for the redemption of his fellowmen. This feeling is more pronounced in his *Tiruvāymoḻi.* In several places he draws God's attention to the world. It has been shown that they are not preceptors to reform the world and enforce ethical code on people. It has been shown that the Āḻvārs are the band of mystic people who came in the line of *Vedic* tradition. Nammāḻvār is spoken of as "*vētam tamiḻ ceyta māṟaṉ*" (māṟaṉ who rendered the *Veda* into Tamil). To many of the *Ācāryas* after Nāthamuni, *Nālāyiram* became reputed as *Tamil Vedas* and *Tiruvāymoḻi* as the *Upaniṣad.* Just as the *Vedas* became the supreme authority as a source book of knowledge about ultimate truths, so also these matters which have attained popularity through the *Nālāyiram* justify the compositions of the Āḻvārs to get the appellation *Vedas* and the *Nālāyiram* can be termed as *Drāvida Veda.*

THE GENERAL APPROACH OF THE ĀḶVĀRS

The vast Sanskrit literature represented by the *Āgamas*, *Purāṇas* and epics and the ancient classical Tamil literature provided the Āḷvārs with sufficient data about the theistic aspects of philosophy and religion. Much material was then available to them to develop the already existent concepts of Vaiṣṇavism into a fully developed form of Vaiṣṇavite theism though not as a system of thought.

The significant imports which are conveyed by the names Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa are meant to be denoted by the name Nārāyaṇa itself which the Āḷvārs use frequently to refer to the Supreme Being.[1] The *Paurāṇic* representation of Viṣṇu as one of the *Tirimūrttis* and as having more power and individuality over the other two and being quite independent of them also is retained by the Āḷvārs. The earth which was lifted by the Lord in His descent as Varāha, gained an eminent position in the *Purāṇas* by getting married to Him,[2] but it is in these compositions of the Āḷvārs that she (*Bhū*) gets the status of becoming His consort along with Lakṣmī.[3] The influence of the Tamil versions of the Bhāgavata story added Nappiṉṉai as one more consort to the Lord.[4] The divine form with its dark complexion, together with the distinguishing marks such as conch, discus and others, is repeatedly mentioned by the Āḷvārs to demonstrate the easy accessibility, approachability and identification of the Lord. Another trait of His that finds reference in the *Nālāyiram* is

1. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.6; Peri. Tm. 1 1; Nāṉ. Tv, 1; T.V.M. 1.2: 10.
2. cf. *Śrī Guṇaratnakāśa*, 26.
3. Peri. Tm. 4.5: 5; M.Tv. 42; Tc. V. 72; T.V.M. 8.1: 1.
4. T.V.R. 3; T.V.M. 1.9: 4; Peri. Tm. 2.3: 5.

His plentitude which is never affected by His acts of creation. The Āḷvārs conveniently chose the word 'nampi' which they used to refer to this aspect of Nārāyaṇa.[5] He is the Lord of the two regions *(vibhūtis)* of prosperity one representing the material world and the other to be reached by His devotees.[6] For the first time in the Vaiṣṇavite literature the concept of God having the world as His body[7] is evolved in these compositions not as a fundamental doctrine but as an experienced fact that requires no proof and therefore to be admitted without any reservation.

That the Lord is also addressed by the twelve names beginning with Keśava and ending with Dāmodara, sometimes brings out the full implications of addressing God with such names.[8]

That the Lord is beyond the reach of the *Vedas*[9] but is to be known from the *Vedas* is repeatedly mentioned[10] thus showing that these compositions deserve a place in the Vaiṣṇavite religion as they owe much to the *Vedic* sources.

The Āḷvārs were not much interested in enumerating the Lord's attributes but confined themselves to mention by way of illustrations, His easy accessibility and above all His mercy for the suffering selves. They are equally drawn towards the Lord by the parental affection *(vātsalya)* which He displays now and then. It is but natural that on account of this quality that the Āḷvārs should approach the Lord for guidance and protection, as they would their fathers. The various exploits which He displayed through His divine descents are sufficient proofs for His readiness to relieve His men of their

5. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.9: 4; 2.3: 1; T.V.M. 1.10: 8.

6. M.Tv. 68.

7. T.V.M. 1.1: 7; 8 5: 10; Peri. Tm. 7.10: 9.

8. Periyāḷ. Tm. 2.3; T.V.M. 2.7.

9. Peri. Tm. 4.1: 6; 4.8: 7.

10. ibid. 7.1: 2; M.Tv. 33.

sufferings. Their wonder is explicitly uttered through their poems not necessarily for the extraordinary powers which He exhibited but chiefly for His feeling of compassion which prompted Him to take such forms which His men would have desired to visualize. It is therefore that among the five forms which the Lord takes, the *vibhava* and *arcā* forms had more attraction for these saints. In this connection it must be noted that the approach of worship by the Āḷvārs to these forms was a synthetic one comprising all the five.[11]

Certain incidents which are not too well-known but traceable to the *Purāṇas* are mentioned for purposes of illustrations, but a few among them could not have their sources determined. Killing the seven bulls, breaking the *kurunta* tree, *Kuṭakkūttu* and others which are all mentioned in the ancient Tamil literature find frequent references in these Tamil poems of the saints.[12]

Above all this, the Āḷvārs were actuated by a deep attraction towards the Lord, which led to the outpourings of their heart in the mellifluous Tamil verses. Besides the deep yearning to be by the side of the Lord, mystic experience also characterises their love for Him. Love however is not of a uniform nature. The affection which a mother would bestow on the child and the mother's interest in attending to the child's bedecking and fondling are gloriously and deftly displayed by Periyāḷvār.[13] How the Lord's absence is keenly felt is represented in the disguised form of the lamentations of Devaki,[14] Kauśalyā, and Daśaratha.[15] However, the chief mode of display of their love takes the shape of the bride's love for her lover who is no other than the Lord Himself.

Love of the Āḷvārs which is not different from devotion

---

11. M.Tv. 99; I.Tv. 28; Mū.Tv. 30; Nāṉ. Tv. 36; T.V.M. 6.9: 5.
12. Vide Appendix III.
13. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.3; 2.4; 2 7.
14. Perum. Tm. 7.
15. ibid. 9.

shows their relation with Him. Awe and mystery marked their love with the result that they sang His praise and spoke in favour of worshipping Him and His men. Even there, true to the traditions of theistic religions, the Āḷvārs chose to worship His feet, long for keeping them on their heads thus revealing the feet that they would rather prefer to be His servants than have His companionship which He would of course not withhold from them.

What is of great astonishment and interest is the Āḷvār's great absorption in the *arcā* forms of God. Firstly, the deep impressions of theistic tendencies are aroused in them at the sight of these forms. Secondly, these saints are made to call the exploits of the Lord through His other forms which are associated with the person of the *arcā* forms. Thirdly and lastly, the aesthetic beauty of the idols noted for their architectural perfection evokes in the minds of the Āḷvārs feelings of varied nature. Apart from the transcendental heights of the Lord which the saints are conscious of, the fascinating perfection of the beautiful idols draws them close to the deity and make them pay soul-stirring praises which they are capable of giving expression to. The masculine features which arouse in the minds of not only men but also women by reason of their expressiveness of indomitable courage and martial spirit, attract these pious souls and remind them too often of the heroic deeds of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. At the same time, these features are uniquely mingled with those of bewitching handsomeness which captivate the soul enrapture it as it would the mind of a woman. Naturally, these Āḷvārs pour forth their hearts in musical melodies filled with passionate lyrical touches in the background of devotional elements of very pure and perfect order.

The references to three *mantras* show beyond the shadow of doubt that they had before their periods the concepts of these but which, on account of their writings, became the crux of the post-Āḷvār Vaisnavism and indispensable to the doctrine of self-surrender.[16]

16. Chapter – 23

Much as they were alive to the limitations of men in bondage and the sufferings of being mortals, they revealed through their compositions how much of worldly sufferings they knew. They were not, in the real sense, affected by the sufferings of the world but they did not choose to remain passive witnesses of human suffering. In a variety of ways, they offered solutions to end the sufferings.[17]

Having relished the sweet experience of communion with God, they could not remain content with the enjoyment of love. They realised that they had to face the limits imposed on them for these enjoyments by the mortal frames. With a view to have uninterrupted enjoyment of God's proximity they hankered for a life beyond death when there would be no imperfect frame nor the spatial or temporal limitations.

---

17. Chapter-25

THE GODHEAD

To the Āḷvārs, the existence of the Supreme Deity is an admitted fact and as such there was no need for them to make any attempt to prove His existence. The gross bodies that are seen in the world are only manifestations of God. Though they are not generally apprehended as such, they are to be taken as representing His existence in a subtle form and therefore as lying beyond comprehension. He is likely to be referred to as not existing but in reality He is existing.[1] The epics and the *Purāṇas* declare the identity between the Upaniṣadic concept of the Supreme as Brahman and the theological one as a Personal Deity.[2] Nammāḷvār recognizes this and refers to Him in the opening verse of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as 'avan̲' a word in the masculine gender. This word which is a personal pronoun suggests that the Supreme Person is well-known and becomes readily understood when this word is used. The name of the deity is not mentioned here in the first decad which is devoted to the treatment of the nature of the Supreme Being.

In the next decad the Āḷvār identifies this person with Nārāyaṇa.[3] Elsewhere he refers to Him as 'Māyan̲'.[4] The word '*nārāyaṇa*' has much significance here. The word '*nāra*' means the things relating to men and those that are created. The Supreme Person is the resting place (*ayana*) of all that is created.[5] Again the Vedic deities, as we know, are more than

1. T.V.M. 1.1: 9.
2. M.Bh. Anugītā 186: 9, 10; V.P. 6.5: 76.
3. T.V.M. 1.2: 10; cf. ibid. 1.3: 3.
4. T.V.C. 7.
5. cf. M.Bh. Anuśāsana 186: 7.

one and it is necessary to ascertain which among these is supreme as the substratum of others. After the manner of the *Purāṇas*, the Āḷvārs recognise the concept of Tirimūrtti, that is Brahmā as the creator, Viṣṇu the protector and Rudra the destroyer of the Universe.[6] Nārāyaṇa is identified with Tirimūrtti.[7] He created Brahmā from whom Śiva sprang.[8] While Brahmā and Śiva do the work of creation and destruction of the Universe respectively at the instance of Nārāyaṇa, the task of protecting the created was undertaken by Nārāyaṇa Himself.[9] This declares Nārāyaṇa's supremacy over the other two deities. The other deities as Indra, Varuṇa, Sūrya and others who came to occupy a relatively subordinate position in the epics and the *Purāṇas* became verily reduced to a still inferior position of utter dependence on Nārāyaṇa, who likewise came to be treated by Nammāḷvār as the foremost among all deities.[10] Nārāyaṇa is equal only to Himself and there is no deity equal or superior to Him.[11] Again the Āḷvārs, continuing the traditional teachings of the ancient seers, have spoken of these differences between the Lord of all on one side and Brahmā, Rudra and other deities on the other. "The gods are the only food eaten by Bhagavāṉ and vomited afterwards (eaten during *pralaya* and vomited during creation); are there any (gods) who are not the nature of this vomit?"[12] Nammāḷvār says: "Arjuna saw on Śiva's head, the flowers of the garland that he had placed at the feet of the holy Bhagavāṉ which had measured the whole world, and understood clearly that Śrīkṛṣṇa was the Supreme Deity wearing a garland of green tuḷaci."[13] In another context he

6. T.V.M. 1.1: 8; 1.3: 3; 2.8: 3; 8.4: 9.
7. ibid. 3.6: 1, 2; 7.6: 3, 4; 8.4: 6, 10; 8.8: 4; Peri. Tm. 6.6: 6.
8. Tc. V. 5; Nāṉ. Tv. 1; TVLK. 1. 1; T.V.M. 10. 10: 3. cf. Var. P. 90: 3.
9. Nāṉ. Tv. 87; cf. Rām. Uttara. 101: 26.
10. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.10; 7; Peri. Tm. 6.1: 9; Tc. V. 48; T.V.C. 3; M.T. 15; cf. M.Bh. Bhīṣma 67: 2.
11. T.V.M. 2.3: 2; 4.5: 7. cf. M.Bh. Bhīṣma 67: 2.
12. Peri. Tm. 11.6: 2.
13. T.V.M. 2.8: 6.

addresses the Lord as : "O Thou art the original bulb of the lotus of the navel, from which arose Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and others who worship Thee with reverence".[14] The contrast between Nārāyaṇa and Rudra is vividly drawn in respect of their positions. While Viṣṇu has Garuḍa as the vehicle, Śiva's vehicle is the bull. The *Vedas* speak of the glory of the former while the *Śaiva Āgamas* alone speak of the greatness of the latter. The milky occan is the resting place for the former, whereas the latter's place is the mount Kailāsa. Kindliness characterizes the former who is the protector of the world while ferocity is the mark of the latter who is the destroyer. The discus is the weapon of Viṣṇu whose complexion reminds us of the water-laden cloud whereas Śiva who is fierce like fire has trident as the weapon.[15]

Viṣṇu's omnipresent form presents every thing in the world to one who can visualise Him. In particular, the Āḷvārs mention the presence of Śiva in the person of Viṣṇu. "On the right side of the Lord, Rudra takes his place; Brahmā and the worlds created by him abide in His navel."[16] In the compositions of the Āḷvārs there is thus frequent reference to Śiva in particular, intending to show that Rudra held in highest veneration by the Śaivites, is not the Supreme Person but subordinated to Viṣṇu and Brahmā also. His position is not totally eclipsed by Nārāyaṇa's eminence as it is the case with other deities. The Āḷvārs could note his pre-eminent position in the body of Nārāyaṇa. Pārvati is stated to have conveyed to her consort Śiva about Nārāyaṇa's greatness[17] which it is said, was given to people by Śiva by way of secret instructions.[18] The Āḷvārs therefore describe the gods as attending upon Nārāyaṇa. "The one with crescent moon and matted hair on his head, the four-faced god, and Indra know Thee to be Supreme and worship Thee."[19] "My Lord is He

14. ibid. 10.10: 3.
15. M.Tv. 5.
16. T.V.M. 1.3: 9. cf. 2.5: 2; 4.8: 1, 10; 7.6: 7; 10.4: 6 Peri. Tm. 2.6: 9; 3.4: 9; 6.1: 3; 7.10: 3, 7; 9.6: 1; M.Tv. 28, 98; Mu. Tv. 31.
17. Nāṉ. Tv. 78.
18. ibid. 17; cf. Bhāg. P. 4.24: 27-31.
19. T.V.M. 3.1: 10; cf. Peri. Tm. 4.1: 4; M.Tv. 52.

Who swallows (for saving at the time of involution) all sentient beings including Rudra and Brahmā."[20] "Indra who rules over the gods, Brahmā the god with four faces, and the great Śiva with matted locks of hair-all these meditate with earnestness and sincerity on His lotus feet and go about praising Him."[21] "It is well known through the story of Kapāla *mokṣa* that Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme deity to the renounced god Rudra, and his father Brahmā and other gods."[22] "The unique cloud-complexioned God who, with *Mokṣa*, *Svarga*, and Hell as uppermost limits and with the celestials in the middle, and as the three-fold cause, extends everywhere."[23] "The dancing God who has His temple at Vaikuntha is worshipped by all the templed gods."[24] "The supreme Lord blesses Śiva and Brahmā who find Him beyond their reach and worship Him longing for His grace."[25] "The Lord at Tirumāliruñcōlai is the One Who is celebrated by the three-eyed god, Brahmā the source of knowledge, the Devas and their king, and the ṛṣis who can dispel ignorance"[26]; and "He in the form of Varāha, that lifted the whole universe is God as much of the Celestials and Eternals as of the terrestrials"[27]; and further "He who is the embodiment of individuality, He who stands no comparison with other and He amidst others is an individual by Himself."[28] "All the deities, Rudras, Ādityas, Sages, Māruts, Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas, Indra and others throng at His gate and patiently await to behold Him in the early hours of the morning."[29]

---

20. ibid. 3.10: 9.
21. ibid. 2.2: 10; cf. ibid. 3.6: 4.
22. ibid. 4.10: 4.
23. ibid. 2.8: 10.
24. ibid. 8.6: 5.
25. ibid. 10.7: 6; cf. P. Tv. 71; M.Tv. 74; and M.Bh. Śānti 361: 14, 15.
26. ibid. 10.7: 7.
27. T.V.R. 99.
28. P.Tv. 24.
29. T.E. 6, 7, 8, 9.

In spite of holding a position for higher than that of the mortals, the gods are no better than men in their inability to comprehend the real nature and greatness of Nārāyaṇa.[30] Periyāḻvār says: "O Lord Whose glory cannot be adequately understood even by him who rides on the unique bull and by the four-faced god"[31]; and again "Neither the god who has the bull emblem for his banner (Śiva), nor Brahmā, nor Indra, nor any other knows the remedy for the disease called 'birth' (*samsāra*)".[32] "Who can know of the glory of the Lord" says Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvar, "who swallowed the universe and brought it into being? Even the blue-throated god and the eight-eyed Brahmā cannot understand it."[33] Poykaiyāḻvār says: "One can prattle something which may result in the names of the Lord being uttered; but who can comprehend Him? Even Brahmā who abides permanently in the lotus bulb of His navel cannot see His lotus feet";[34] and again, "who can comprehend Thy glory even if one takes to research for all the time? Who can understand Thy auspicious Form? Or who else can know at least the ocean of milk on which You repose?"[35] None is equal to the Lord.[36]

The concept of Godhead as conceived by the Āḻvārs was not narrowed down, or restricted thus in its applicability to Nārāyaṇa alone but was all-encompassing in its aspect. The Paurāṇikas dwell at length on the heno-theistic aspect of various deities. The worship of the phallus is enjoined in some *Purānas*. The Jains and Buddhists uphold their own concept of the deity. All these dispute zealously with those whose concepts of the deity are opposed to theirs. The truth about all these concepts is that Nārāyaṇa alone presents

30. Peri. Tm. 7.6: 6; Nāṉ. Tv. 2, 10; cf M.Bh. Śānti. 210: 33.
31. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.10: 4.
32. ibid. 5.3: 6.
33. Nāṉ. Tv. 73.
34. M.Tv. 56.
35. ibid. 68.
36. Nāṉ. Tv. 56.

Himself with all these features.[37] Nammāḷvār is not advocating polytheism here but monotheism which is catholic in its comprehension. Exclusive and not preferential worship would inevitably lead to this conclusion. The other deities have their role to play but have their subservience to Nārāyaṇa. In a way, this attitude is akin to and not identical with the one which, it is held, was stated by the great Nyāya exponent Udayaṇācārya in the Eleventh century A.D. Hari, another name for Viṣṇu, is described to have been worshipped by the followers of the different schools of thought under different names.[38] Of similar strain is the famous *bhajana* song of Mahātma Gāndhi.[39]

The one chief aspect of God head in the school of Vaiṣṇavism as taught is the ancient works like *Viṣṇupurāna* and Āḷvārs' compositions is that the personal deity who is no other than Brahman is Nārāyaṇa with Śrī. The *Nālāyiram* came into being under the aegis of the Divine Couple, Nārāyaṇa and Śrī who were the prompters of the *Prabandhas* and the verses of the First three Āḷvārs were sung and had their premiere (*arankēṟṟam*) in Their presence. Poykaiyāḷvār says: "Thou the protector of the cowherds for the torrents of rain caused by Indra, and the Goddess Lakṣmī ".[40] The god-intoxicated Peyāḷvār who was blessed with a direct vision of the luminous form of the Lord and Śrī exclaimed: "I have seen Lakṣmī. I have seen a golden-coloured beautiful figure (body). I have seen the lovely effulgence of the rising sun. I have seen the bright discus and conch in the hands. All these I see today in my ocean-hued Lord."[41] Nammāḷvār

37. T.V.M. 4.10: 5.

38. This utterance has only the validity of hear-say, as it is not recorded in any work of this writer. "The Śaivas worship Him as Siva; the Vedāntins as Brahman; the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyayikas as Karta (creator); tha Jains as Arhat: and Mīmāmsakas as karma" (Vide: *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 199).

39. "Sīta Rāma is the purifier of those who have fallen down. Jesus (Īśvar) and Allāh are His names. O, Lord give wisdom to all."

40. M.Tv. 86.

41. Mu. Tv. 1.

refers to the Divine Couple in his poem: "Thou art ever with Lakṣmī adorned with shining bracelets".[42] "Am I still to remain in *samsāra* without enjoying You in the company of Lakṣmī?"[43] "Thy grace and the grace of the lotus-born Goddess – with these I will sweep the floor of Thy temple".[44] "Thou and the lotus-born spouse should be pleased to accept the service of three worlds."[45] Thus the Lord is referred to as ever associated with Śrī,[46] and as the consort of Śrī.[47] He is addressed as 'Mātava' meaning consort of Śrī, as He had kept in His chest[48] the accomplished woman, whose looks resemble those of the deer. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār makes an emphatic declaration that those deities who have no relationship to Śrī are no deities at all.[49] Nārāyana and Śrī are ever united together.[50]

The descent of the Lord as Varāha gave importance to the earth which came to be designated as Bhūdevi, married to Viṣṇu. Thus arose a place for Bhūdevi along with Viṣṇu. Nappiṉṉai, the gopī in the gokulam, married Kṛṣṇa. Thus the Lord is frequently referred to as having Bhūdevi and Śrīdevi,[51] and at times also Nappiṉṉai.[52] Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi are said to be shampooing the feet of the Lord when He is having the *yoganidra*.[53]

---

42. T.V.M. 4.9: 10.
43. ibid. 6.9: 3.
44. ibid. 9.2: 1.
45. ibid. 9.2: 3.
46. ibid. 1.3: 8; 6.10: 10.
47. ibid. 1.9: 1.
48. cf. P.R.P. 1. 11. 3, 9.
49. Nāṉ. Tv. 53; cf. ibid. 62.
50. V.P. 1.8: 17, 35.
51. Peri. Tm. 4.5: 5; 7.8: 1; 8.7: 9; M.Tv. 42; Tc.V. 72.
52. T.V.R. 3, 21; T.V.M. 1.9: 4; 8.1: 1. Peri. Tm. 2.3: 5; 3.3: 9; 3.10: 1.
53. T.V.L.K. 11. 26 to 28.

There are certain characteristics which have a special and particular applicability to Nārāyaṇa alone and to which the Āḻvārs make frequent references. The Lord is of the complexion of the cloud, has four arms adorned with conch, discus, mace, sword and bow.[54] The sword is called Nandaka and the bow Sārṅga. The garland made of tuḷaci is worn by Him alone and not by any other deity. The Āḻvārs wax eloquent over the Lord's having this garland.[55] Garuḍa is His vehicle and also the emblem in His banner and not of any other deity.[56] He reclines on a bed of Ādiśeṣa.[57] The precious stone called *kaustubha* adorns His chest[58] which has a mole called *Śrīvatsa*[59]. He wears a cloth golden in colour.[60]

Thus the Supreme Person is, according to the Āḻvārs, Nārāyaṇa with Śrīdevi, Bhūdevi and Nappiṉṉai as His consorts. He is reckoned as one with Tirimūrtti and is also beyond the comprehension of Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other deities who are all subordinated to Him and who perform the duties of creation, destruction and other functions in accordance with the lines laid down by Him and are therefore indebted to Him who possess peculiar marks which single Him out in the group of His hosts.

---

54. T.V.M. 8.8: 1. cf. ibid.. 2.5: 1: M.Tv. 28, Mu. Tv. 21, 100; P.R.P. 2.11. 36 to 40.

55. ibid. 1.5: 7; 1.8: 1, Mu. Tv. 50; Nāṉ.Tv. 11. PRP. 13. 1.60.

56. ibid. 1.6: 10; 1.8: 1; 5.7: 3; M.Tv. 17, 22; 1.Tv. 92, 96? Mu. Tv. 7. cf. C.L.P. 2.17: 28, P.R.P. 3.1:60.

57. ibid. 6.6: 7; 10. 2; 8; M.Tv. 53, I.Tv. 15; Mu. Tv. 80; cf. C.L.P. 1.11: 1.2.

58. Mu. Tv. 87. cf. P.R.P. 1.1.9.

59. T.V.M. 10.3: 5.

60. T.V.R. 1.1.1; A.P. 2.3; cf. C.L.P. 2. 11; p.50; P.R.P. 1.11. 10, 56; 3.1. 88; 13.11.1, 2.

CHAPTER XV

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE

The Supreme Person in the Vaiṣṇavite system of thought is Nārāyaṇa who is identical with Brahmaṇ. The infinitude of this person is beyond the comprehension of human thought and therefore cannot be adequately described. Nārāyaṇa is said to nave a form and also not to have any. He is closely connected with the world, but is also apart from it.[1] There is nothing which He is not. He is Ourselves, He is She, It, This, That and They. He is the god of both good and bad people. He represents things which are nearby and those which are far off. He is those that became, are becoming and would become. He is the things of the past, present and future.[2] He could not be understood even by the learned.[3] He is neither male nor female, nor eunuch.[4] He cannot be said to exist or not to exist.[5] He cannot be known by the senses or mind[6] or His greatness ascertained even if one attempts to do so all through the times.[7] It is difficult to say whether He is standing or sitting or lying or He is not standing, sitting or lying.[8] His activities extend beyond space and hence could not be measured even by Brahmā.[9] He is not that which is or that which is not. It would be highly difficult to speak even a few

1. T.V.M. 1.1: 3.
2. ibid. 1.1: 4.
3. ibid. 1.3: 3.
4. ibid. 2.5: 10.
5. ibid. 2.5: 10.
6. ibid. 1.1: 2. ef. Muṇ. Up. 1, 1: 6; 3.1: 8.
7. M.Tv. 68.
8. T.V.M. 1.1: 6.
9. ibid. 1.3: 10.

words about Him.[10] All the six schools of thought could not even discuss His nature, even if they group themselves together and attempt to do this all the time.[11] Though He is said to be of different colours in each *yuga*, He could not be visualised to have a particular form and a definite colour.[12] Words which are uttered could denote His names, but these are poor aids to know Him.[13]

Such descriptions of Nārāyaṇa which the compositions of the Āḻvārs, especially those of Nammāḻvār, contain show that the Supreme Person lies beyond the understanding of words and thoughts.[14] In this respect, the approach of the Āḻvārs is similar to that which is had in the *Upaniṣads*. The Āḻvārs refer to the *Vedas* as revealed by the Supreme Person at the time of creation,[15] having preserved it during deluge.[16] The four eternal *Vedas* reveal Him as the only and the foremost Supreme Being.[17] God is the subject matter dealt with in the *Vedas*.[18] He is therefore to be known only through them[19] which are only Nārāyaṇa's form.[20] This is in consonance with the Vedāntic tradition that the *Vedas* are the sole authorities in matters relating to the ultimate reality. Perception and other means of valid cognition such as inference are of no avail in knowing the Supreme Person. The ancient *Vedas* treat Him as non-different from form and

---

10. ibid. 2.5: 10.
11. ibid. 4.10: 9. The six systems are those of Buddha, Kaṇāda, Jaina, Kapila, Patañjali and Gautama.
12. T.N. 3; Tc. V. 44; Nān. Tv. 24; Peri. Tm. 1.8: 2.
13. M.Tv. 56; cf. T.V.M. 2.5: 10; 2.7: 12; 3.1: 2; 3.4.
14. cf. Taitt. Up. 2: 4:
15. Peri, Tm. 5.7: 3; cf. M.Tv. 33.
16. 1. Tv. 48,
17. T.V.M. 1.1: 7; 1.6: 2; 3.5: 5; M.Tv. 68; 1. Tv. 45.
18. ibid. 3.1: 11; M.Tv. 28; Nāṉ. Tv. 13; Peri. Tm. 3.5: 9. Periyaḷ. Tm 1.5: 3.
19. ibid. 7.1: 2.
20. ibid. 2.7:2.

formlessness.[21] The *Sāma-veda*, the *Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad*, the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* and the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* treat of Him. He is described as fit to be worshipped through the Pañcāgni which is taught in the *Katha Upaniṣad*.[22] Nammāḷvār goes to a further extent in declaring that the Supreme Person cannot be known even by the *Vedas* which are held to be repositories of knowledge and wisdom and also by the rare works such as *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.[23] The *Vedas* describe Him in an indirect way.[24] The four *Vedas* run in search of Him,[25] but not yet found Him.[26] In a way, this explains the Upaniṣadic statement that words and thoughts return unsuccessfully without getting at Him.[27]

A study of the *Vedas* reveals that the subject matter of the Scriptures is the consort of Śrī.[28] He is the enchanting music of the *Rg. Veda*[29] and is the nectar as it were obtained from the four oceans of the *Vedas*.[30] He takes His abode in the four *Vedas* which are properly recited.[31] God is thus to be found not in the printed or written text of the *Vedas* but in their recitations. The *Śāstras* also declare Him as the Supreme Person.[32] Thus the *Vedas* serve as the only means of knowing the Supreme Person, however imperfectly He is presented through those texts.

The possession by the Supreme Person of the discus, conch, mace, bow and other weapons presupposes the admission of a physical frame for Him. Such a physical body must be

---

21. ibid. 7.8: 10.
22. Tc. V. 14; Peri. Tm. 5.5: 9; cf. ibid. 7.7: 2.
23. T.V.M. 9.3: 3; cf. ibid., 3.1: 6.
24. I.Tv. 83.
25. Peri. Tm. 4.8: 3.
26. ibid. 4.8: 7.
27. Taitt. Up. 2: 9.
28. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 1.
29. ibid. 6.1 : 7.
30. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.3 : 11.
31. Mū. Tv. 11, 31.
32. idid. 11.

of finite dimensions which could come within the comprehension of the mortals. At the same time, the admission of a body would deprive the Supreme Person of His infinite nature. It is therefore declared that Nārāyaṇa has two forms, one visible and the other invisible. The former is His own form and the latter is represented by the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, and *Purāṇas*.[33] Nammāḷvār goes a step further and declares that the Lord has a form and does not also have a form.[34] To have an invisible form is as good as having no form. The Āḷvār does not see any reason to use the word 'form' which is invariably associated in its sense with the concrete nature and finiteness of the frame. To finitise the infinite is sacrilegious to the worshipper of the divine. When it is said that the Lord does not have a form, what is actually meant is that He has a cosmic body which encompasses the whole universe and which being transcendent is beyond the understanding of both gods and men. Such a cosmic form is not one, but many,[35] most of which are not known to any one. He takes any body He chooses but only a few of these come within the purview of human understanding.[36]

The *Itihāsa*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Āgamas* depict the Supreme Person as in possession of a physical frame[37] which is not made up of the flesh, bones and other products of matter but yet akin to that of the human beings. This is perhaps due to a desire to present to the suffering and devout humanity a frame, the like of which is familiar to it in their own bodies but which is far superior, more enduring and much more attractive than the mortal frames. The Āḷvārs who had already this traditional representation of the Supreme Person began at first to get attracted to the cosmic form in which He found the several aspects of nature presenting themselves as the various parts of the body.[38]

---

33. V.P. 1.22: 55, 56; 5.1: 35 to 50; 6.5: 61 to 69.
34. T.V.M. 1.1: 9.
35. T.V.M. 2.5: 6; cf. ibid., 8.1: 10.
36. ibid. 8.1: 1. cf. M.Tv. 44.
37. ibid. 3.5: 5; cf. M.Bh. Śānti. 206: 60; Var. P. 31: 40
38. T.V.M. 4.3: 3; N.R.R. invocatory verse.

The depiction of ākāśa in the *Upaniṣad*[39] as the body of the Brahman should have suggested to the ancient seers and to the Āḻvārs, the dark complexion of the Supreme Person Nārāyaṇa.[40] His face is said to be attractive through the complexion of the sea, water-laden cloud and blue sapphire[41]. The hugeness of the sea must be taken to refer to His cosmic body. The incitement of the water-laden cloud to the solace which it affords from the oppressive heat that His body would, when visualised, free the embodied self from the sufferings in the world. The limited size of the sapphire represents the attractiveness of His features.

The Āḻvārs frequently refer to the parts of His body. Tenderness and charm together characterize each limb of His[42] and so the lotus that is fully blossomed is frequently cited to draw comparisions with each of these limbs.[43] Apart from the eyes[44] which proclaim His tenderness of feeling and compassion to humanity, the crown,[45] the shoulders[46] revealing His might and the feet[47] which are worshipped and sought after by the devout persons get frequent references and receive a graphic description. The feet of Tirivikrama were like lotuses, His body was like the water of the sea and the crown like the sun.[48]

The supramundane radiance[49] which has a bewitching influence on the Āḻvārs affords ample opportunity to them to describe it as the cumulative effect produced on the worshipper without a specific reference to any limb. The mind of the Āḻvārs is enthralled by this beauteous frame which is deco-

39. Taitt. Up. 1 : 6.
40. T.V.M. 6.1: 7; 6.2: 10.
41. ibid. 5.2: 3; 6.10; 3; Mu. T.V. 9.
42. T.V.M. 5.1: 6, 6.1: 7; 7.6: 6.
43. ibid., 2.5: 3, 4; 5.5: 6; 8.9: 1; T.V.R. 43, 57; T.N. 21; Mū. Tv. 9.
44. I. Tv. 18,
45. T.V.M. 8.8: 1; A.P. 7.
46. T.V.M. 6.1: 8; 3.1: 10; 3.3: 4.
47. ibid. 1.1: 1; 5.8: 8.
48. Mū. Tv. 5.6.
49. T.V.M. 6.10: 1, 1.7: 4.

rated by the gems, ornaments and robes which have each a peculiar grace and elegance.[50]

The use of the words, 'uṭampu'[51] 'vaṭivu',[52] 'uruvam'[53] and 'mūrtti[54] is the clear proof for the Āḻvārs' recognition of a frame for the deity. The frame is referred to as divine or holy by the prefix 'tiru' as an ordinary epithet.[55] Quite often the Āḻvārs employ the phrase 'cuṭar oḷi' to convey the effulgent brilliance of the form.[56] This frame of the Lord is said to be unique pertaining to Him alone.[57]

Nammāḻvār describes the Lord's auspicious form in his poems as possessing the following physical attributes - the conch, the discus, the lotus eyes, the red lips;[58] the sacred thread, the ear pendants, the mole on the chest, the constantly worn ornaments and the four arms;[59] the victorious bow, the mace and the sword;[60] the cool basil garland, the golden crown, the auspicious form, the well-sitting silken garment and the waist girdle;[61] the long-drawn eye-brows and well-suited lotus eyes;[62] the well-drawn and well-shaped nose and the blue-hued complexion;[63] the halo around His body;[64] the well curved back, the narrow waist;[65] and the beauties of the

---

50. ibid. 8.4: 7; 8,8: 1; 3.4: 3.
51. ibid. 4.8: 1.
52. Ī.Tv. 81.
53. T.V.M. 8.1: 1.
54. ibid. 3. 10: 10.
55. ibid. 1.10: 9; 7.1: 8.
56. ibid. 3.10: 9; 5.2: 11.
57. ibid. 4.3: 2; 4.8: 1.
58. T.V.M. 5.5: 1; 1.9:3; T.V.C. 1.5.
59. ibid. 5.5: 2; 1.9: 8.
60. ibid. 5.5: 3.
61. ibid. 5.5: 4.
62. ibid. 5.5: 5.
63. ibid. 5.5: 6; 2.5: 5; cf. C. TML. Kaṉ. 12
64. ibid. 5.5: 7.
65. ibid. 5.5: 8.

body from head to foot with the ensemble of all the ornaments.[66]

The conception of a finitised form for the Supreme Person is based on the recognition of the motive which prompts Him to take up that form. This motive lies in His desire to present Himself before the devotees who are earnestly praying for a personal and direct communion with Him. This suggests that the love of God on the part of the selves brings Him near them. God is then actuated by a desire to join them and enjoy their presence. The Supreme Person must thus be recognized to have certain attributes or qualities which draw Him to the selves. The possession of such attributes is not to be explained through His physical frame.

The *Upaniṣads*[67] speak of Him as having three ontological attributes viz., *satyam* (real) *jñānam* (knowledge) and *anantam* (infinite). He has *satyam* which is unconditioned reality which is real of the real,[68] as the essential nature is not affected to expansion and contraction by matter and is not subjected to the workings of *karma*. Likewise, the attribute *jñānam* is infinite consciousness. Brahman is not limited through space or time or any object. The absolute is unconditioned and perfect. It is beyond the passing shows of *prakṛti*, the fleeting flux of time and the endless chain of causation. Though Brahman is in the phenomenal world of space-time, It exceeds their content. It is eternally unconditioned and perfect and therefore It is infinite. These three determining attributes form the essential nature of Brahman.

The Āḷvārs, who were influenced by the tradition of the *Vedas*, refer to Nārāyaṇa as the ever true[69] and the ever real. He is unchangingly real. This feature forms the basis for the world to remain real, though it has to change ever and anon. The knowledge which is the attribute of Brahman is not

---

66. ibid. 5.5: 9.
67. Taitt. Up. 2: 1.
68. Br. Up. 2.1 : 20; 2.3 : 6.
69. T.V.M. 1. 1 : 2.

simply a knowledge, subjective in its features for our comprehension, but it is the ultimate object of our experience. It is self-luminous and is described as the light of lights. It is the supreme light, through which other things become lighted. Neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars shine by themselves. They derive their powers of illumination from Him.[70] It is this supreme and transcendent luminosity of Brahman that has attracted the attention of the Āḷvārs who found it in every aspect of God's manifestation. The form of Nārāyaṇa is effulgent and surpasses the lightning in its brillience. Following the Upaniṣadic tradition Nammāḷvār refers to God more or less in the same terminology of light in all his poems. The Lord is referred to as "Peruñcōti"[71] - 'the Great Flame'; "Jñānac-cuṭar viḷakku"[72] - 'the Lamp of Light of Knowledge'; "Jñānac-cuṭar"[73] - the 'Light of Know ledge'.

The three attributes mentioned in the preceding paragraphs have formed the basis for the admission of the countless qualities in the case of the Supreme Person.[74] There is nothing that is visible or invisible that is not pervaded by Him.[75] This is proof of Nārāyaṇa's all-pervasiveness and omnipresence.[76] Similarly He is omniscient, and omnipotent.

The word 'brahman' which is used in the *Upaniṣads* to refer to the Supreme Being means 'huge and increasing'. This aspect of the divine was pressed into service, even in the periods of epics and *Purāṇas,* to determine the nature of Brahman in terms of essential nature (*svarūpa*), form (*rūpa*) and quality (*guṇa*) and every aspect of God's features is treated to be of the highest magnitude surpassing every other

---

70. Kath. Up. 5: 15; Mun. Up. 2.2: 10; Ch. Up. 3.13 : 7. Sv. Up. 6: 14; Mait. Up. 6: 35. cf. V.S. 1.1: 25.
71. P. Tv. 4.
72. T.V.R. 44, 58.
73. T.V.M. 1.5 : 10.
74. ibid. 1.3: 5.
75. ibid. 1.1 : 10.
76. ibid. 2.8 : 8, 9: 3.2 : 7.

thing in the world.[77] This explains the use of the words like 'uyarvu aṟa'[78] which means not having anything higher than that.

Bliss (*ānanda*) is a very important attribute of Brahman which makes the devotee's experience of God delectable. The *Upaniṣad* speaks of the bliss to be of several gradations as enjoyed by several persons placed in different states. The bliss of Brahman is described to be unsurpassed by any others.[79] This is actually corroborated by Nammaḻvār in the opening line of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* where the Supreme Person is stated to have unsurpassed bliss.[80]

It is not proper to apprehend defects in God on the ground that He is present every where in the world whose impurities would affect God. The *Upaniṣads* declare that God is free from sins and possesses true will, and has no stain.[81] 'In Him, the miseries do not exist'.[82] Though responsible for the creation of the world, He is aloof from it.[83] He is unaffected by the impurities like the other in the jar and the sun reflected in water.[84] At the same time God is omniscient,[85] and is full of all auspicious qualities.[86] This proves that the Supreme Person has two marks, namely, absence of defects and presence of all auspicious qualities.[87] The Supreme Person is thus free from imperfections.[88] This is very ably shown by the use of a single word 'amalaṉ'[89]

77. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, pp. 201, 202.
78. T.V.M. 1.1 : 1.
79. Taitt. Up. 2 : 8.
80. TVM 1;1 : 1.
81. Ch. Up. 8.1 : 5; Sv. Up. 6 : 19.
82. V.P. 6.5 : 85.
83. Ch. Up. 8. 14.
84. Yajn. Smṛti. Pra. 144.
85. Muṇ. Up. 1.1 : 9.
86. V.P. 6.5 : 84.
87. cf. V.S. 3.2 : 11 to 25.
88. V.P. 1.22 : 53.
89. A.P. 1; T.V.M. 3.4 : 5.

which must be taken, in its etymological sense, to mean 'one in whom the impurities do not exist'. His qualities do not have any defect.

Among these qualities knowledge (*jñāna*), strength (*bala*), sovereignity (*aiśvarya*), virility (*vīrya*), potency (*śakti*), and splendour (*tējas*) are the six chief qualities which declare the supremacy of the Lord.[90] The characteristic feature of knowledge is luminosity which dispels the darkness of the mind. The Āḷvārs were struck with wonder at this quality of Nārāyaṇa that they could not resist expressing the result of the vision of this quality by treating God as light itself which is imperishable.[91] It is not therefore surprising to find the first three Āḷvārs get a clear vision of Lord amidst material darkness. He is "Parañcōti"[92] - 'the Transcendental Brightness'; "Vāṉ cuṭar"[93] - 'the effulgence of all Space'; "Parañcuṭar"[94] - 'the Transcendental Flame'; "Jñāna veḷḷac-cuṭar viḷakku"[95] - 'the Lamp with the Radiance of the flood of Knowledge'; Netuñcuṭar cōti"[96] - 'the Great Bright Radiance'; "Cuṭarkoḷ cōti"[97] - 'the Bright Radiance'; "Periya para nalmalarccōti"[98] - 'the Transcendental, fine flowary Brilliance' and so on. Again according to the Āḷvār the Lord is "Ellaiyil jñāṉattaṉ"[99] - He is One of limitless Knowledge'. He is spoken of as "Jñāna veḷḷac-cuṭar mūrti"[100] - 'the One who embodies the flood of the light of the Knowledge'; "Niṟainta jñāna mūrtti"[101] - 'Knowledge fully Incarnate';

90. V.P. 6.5 : 85.
91. Peri. Tm. 3.8 : 1.
92. ibid. 3.1 : 3; 3.6 : 3; cf. Peri. Tm. 11.8 : 7, 8.
93. ibid. 2.5 : 2.
94. ibid. 3.2 : 8; 3.5 : 7; 3.6 : 10; 4.3 : 9; 7.1 : 10. cf. Peri. Tm. 1.8 ; 4; 9.9 : 4.
95. ibid. 2.6 : 2.
96. ibid. 2.9 : 10.
97. ibid. 10.1 : 4.
98. ibid. 10.10 : 10.
99. ibid. 3.10 : 8.
100. ibid. 2.2 : 6.
101. ibid. 4.7 : 7; 4.8 : 6.

"Cuṭar oli mūrtti"[102] – 'the Image of Radiant Light'. He is therefore conceived as "Jñānap-pirāṉ"[103] – 'the Lord of Knowledge'; "Ātiyam cōti uru"[104] – 'the Original in the form of Light'. Sometimes He is referred to, paradoxically, as light and darkness: Oṉcuṭaroṭu iruḷumāy"[105] – 'the Lord who is both effulgent Light and Darkness'.

Light, flame, brightness, radiance are all various ways of describing real knowledge which is the form of God as *Cit* because the inexpressible can be expressed only through similies and metaphors. Knowledge is therefore described as "Oṉcuṭarkkaṟṟai"[106] – 'the beam of Radiance'; "Nālvētattuḷ niṉṟa malarccuṭar"[107] – 'the flowery Radiance of the four *Vedas*'; "Oḷikkoṇṭa cōti"[108] – 'the bright Radiance'; "Cōti jñānamūrtti"[109] – 'the Image of the Light of Knowledge'. The idea of this Absolute Light is described poetically as "Cāti nal vayiram"[110] – 'the fine Diamond of the first water'; "Maṇimāṇikkac – cuṭar"[111] – 'the gem-like Effulgence'. It is also conceived sometimes as Blissful Absolute. The Āḻvār refers to it as "Cuṭar jñāna iṉpam"[112] – 'the Bliss of Bright Knowledge'. The idea of Absolute Beauty is expressed as "Pukarkoḷ cōtippirāṉ"[113] – 'the God of Radiance with Beauty'. It is eternal, never going out: "Vaḷar oḷi Īcaṉ"[114] – 'the Lord of waxing Brightness'; "Mūvā mutalvaṉ"[115] – 'the Unageing

102. ibid. 3.7 : 1; 5.2 : 11.
103. T.V.R. 99.
104. T.V.M. 3.5 : 5.
105. ibid. 5.10 : 7.
106. ibid. 1.7 : 4.
107. ibid. 3.1 : 10.
108. ibid. 3.7 : 6.
109. ibid. 4.3 : 8.
110. ibid. 3.4: 4.
111. ibid. 5.7: 6.
112. ibid. 10.10: 10.
113. ibid. 6.4: 3.
114. ibid. 3.10: 10.
115. ibid. 2.1: 10.

Original'; Māmaṇi vaṇṇaṉ"[116] - the handsome Lord of gem-like Brightness'; "Oḷimaṇi vaṇṇaṉ"[117] - 'the Shining Handsome One'. Its purity and holiness are referred to as "Tūya cuṭarc-cōti"[118] - 'the pure bright Effulgence'. That the Absolute does not depend upon anything else is spoken of in terms of spontaneous and self-luminous light: "Nantā viḷakkame"[119] - 'the Unkindled Flame'. That it transcends everything else, even the lights of the world and the soul, is brought out by such expressions as "Parañcuṭar"[120] "Parañcōti"[121] "Paramacōti".[122]

The Lord is self-luminous as real knowledge. He is within our mind. When the inner darkness disappears through yogic practices, He blazes forth as the beautiful light of the great gem. Nāmmāḷvār calls Him as "Karumāṇikkaccuṭar"[123] - 'the Black Gem-like Flame'; "Ceñcuṭar mūrtti"[124] - 'the Dazzling Radiant Image'. He is also referred to 'Karumāṇikkam' in many a place.[125] This metaphor of a gem not only brings out the self-luminous aspect but also its precious worth as the ultimate value. The aspect of bliss is also brought out by this because it is only endearing things and persons of love that are metaphorically spoken of as precious gems. The Lord is the great precious gem of beautiful colour: "Kuru māmaṇi"[126] - 'the Great, Excellent Gem'; "Maitōy cōti maṇivaṇṇaṉ"[127] - 'the Handsome One Who has the Radiance of pitch-dark Brightness'. It seems that Nammāḷvār is

116 Peri. Tm. 7.3: 7! 9.5: 6; 11.2: 7; 11.6: 9.
117. T.V.M. 3.4: 7; 3.10: 2.
118. ibid. 8.7: 4.
119. ibid. 2.1: 9. cf. Peri, Tm. 4.9: 2.
120. ibid 3.6: 10.
121. ibid. 3.6: 3.
122. T.K. 11.
123. ibid. 6.2: 10.
124. ibid. 6.6; 9.
125. ibid., 1.10: 1; 2.7: 1; 3.3: 3; 3.6: 10; 5.1: 5; 5.10: 7! 7.6: 5; 9.5: 7; 10.10: 1; 10.10: 3.
126. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 5. cf. ibid., 3.10: 2; T.K. 6
127. T.V.M. 2.9: 2.

very fond of thc precious stone - "Māṇikkam" - the red carbuncle, because to refer to God he employs the word with prefixes and suffixes profusely : "Cāti māṇikkam"[128] - 'the Red stone of first water'; "Karumāṇikkam"[129] - 'the Dark Gem'; "Maṇimāṇikkam"[130] - 'the Beautiful Gem'. He calls Him as "Poṉmalai"[131] - 'the Hillock of Gold'; Maṇikkuṉṟam"[132] - 'the Hill of Gems'; "Karumāṇikkamalai"[133] - 'the Hill of Black Gems'; "Karumāṇikkamāmalai"[134] - the Great Hill of Dark Gems', "Karumāṇikkak-kūṉṟam"[135] - the Hillock of Dark Gems'; He is "Marakatakkuṉṟam"[136] - 'the Hillock of Emerald'. He presses into service almost all the names of the precious stones to refer to God. He addresses Him "My Gem! my Pearl! and my precious Gem!"[137] "My precious Stone! my Emerald! and my Gold of Perfect Purity!"[138] He refers to Him as "the Pool of Emerald Gems".[139] The great Parakāla calls Him as "the Coral Reef of the Transcendental Hill",[140] "the Gold, the Great Gem, the Bright Ornamented Lightning",[141] "the Emerald with Pearly Brightness, the One of the Hue of the Thundering Clouds",[142] and "the Lamp without Extinction".[143] Nammāḷvār calls Him as "Paramēṭṭi" [144]- 'the Divine Man', and "the Great Original of Flaming Light"

---

128. ibid. 3.4: 3.
129. ibid. 5.1: 1.
130. ibid. 5.7: 6. cf. Peri. Tm. 11.8: 8.
131. ibid. 2.6: 3. cf. Peri. Tm. 2.5: 1.
132. ibid. 5.3: 1.
133. ibid. 8.9: 1.
134. ibid. 9.9: 7,8.
135. ibid. 8.7: 6.
136. T.V.C. 1; T.V.M. 2.5: 4.
137. T.V.R. 84.
138. ibid. 85.
139. T.V.M. 10.1: 9. cf. ibid., 8.9: 1.
140. Peri. Tm. 7.1: 6.
141. ibid. 10. 1: 2.
142. T.K. 10.
143. Peri. Tm. 10.1: 4.
144. T.V.M. 9.10: 8.

etc.[145] He is the delectable Knowledge.[146] which is not produced[147] and through which He presents Himself to those who could see.[148] His pervasion of the universe is through the boundless knowledge.[149]

Strength which consists in the absence of exertion in spite of continuous engagement in taxing work is revealed in the exploits of Kṛṣṇa who was only a young boy. The Lord had then to engage Himself with the demons almost everyday in the groves and meadows of Gokulam while tending the cows there. Lordship is a quality which the Lord possessed as a result of which He was Himself the agent of many acts which He undertook through His strength. This was done by Him out of free will and not by becoming subservient to any one, as for instance the Lord assumed the form of tortoise[150] in order to support the Mandara mountain which was getting sunk in the milky ocean at the time of its being churned for the purpose of getting the nectar. Virility is marked by the absence of any adverse effect due to exertion and the never-failing nature of the undertaking in yielding the result. The successful defeat inflicted by Kṛṣṇa on the demons sent by Kamsa intending to have the former killed serves to illustrate this quality of the Lord.[151] Potency shows the unbounded ability of the Lord to withstand any amount of attack from the adversaries like Madhu, Kaiṭabha[152] and the forces of Rāvaṇa[153] and his hordes and also the taming the seven ferocious bulls[154] and plucking out the tusks of the kuvalayāpīṭa.[155] Splendour consists in the Lord's having no need to

145. ibid. 10.1: 5.
146. ibid. 10.10: 10.
147. ibid. 3·1: 5.
148. ibid. 3.2: 7.
149. ibid. 3.2: 4.
150. Peri. Tm. 11.4 : 2.
151. Tc. V. 37, 80.
152. M.Tv. 83.
153. I.Tv. 43:
154. T.V.M. 2,5 : 7.
155. ibid. 2.7 : 2.

look for anyone's assistance to achieve the task He has undertaken. This is best illustrated by Kṛṣṇa's fighting alone against the demon Bāṇa and the god Śiva and achieving victory over them.[156] The brilliant display of this quality is revealed by the Lord when He held no weapon of warfare but only the whip for driving the horses of Arjuna's chariot in the battlefield. He made Pāṇḍavas get victory with nobody's assistance.[157]

Nammāḻvār revels in the auspicious qualities of Bhagavan. He says: "O my resplendent Lord! I am absorbed in Thy auspicious qualities which are as delicious as milk"[158] He addresses the Lord as One Who ravished Nappiṉṉai, and who is possessed of qualities which can fascinate Him though full of sins.[159] Among His manifold auspicious qualities such of them as *saulabhya*, *vātśalya* and *sousīlya* have more significance and greater appeal to the Āḻvārs as they make Him more accessible to one and all.

Accessibility (*saulabhya*) is the quality which consists in the Lord's mixing freely with all people without reference to their position or status. Kṛṣṇāvatāra is full of incidents to exhibit this quality.[160] The very thought of His birth, how He grew up and how He managed the Mahābhārata war melts the saint's soul. It is difficult to translate the fervour expressed by the simple Tamil words employed in the verses.[161] The Āḻvār thinks of the incidents relating to Pūtana, and Śakaṭāśura, and then pictures to himself the fear exhibited by that sweet little Lord when Yaśodā threatened to beat Him with a small stick for having stolen ghee. That picture wherein the Divine Child is seen with His lotus eyes full of tears appears to cast a spell on the Āḻvār's soul which again melts away into unprecedented love. The story goes that the

---

156. ibid. 3.10 : 4.
157. ibid. 3.2 : 3.
158. P. Tv. 58.
159. T.V.M. 8.1 : 8.
160. T.V.M. 1.3 : 1, 2
161. ibid. 5.10 : 3.

trance that the Āḷvār got into while singing this hymn lasted for six months.[162] No wonder that the language employed in the verses of this hymn is enough to melt even the stony hearts. This trance, it is told, was the second one which he is said to have got into. The first one was much earlier while singing "Pattuṭai aṭiyavarkku eḷiyavaṉ".[163] Here in this verse the saint seeks to demonstrate how easy of approach the Lord is to his devotees. At once, and as an instance of that *saulabhya* he conjures up before his mind's eye the vision of the Lord in bondage. Says the Āḷvār: "How great is the accessibility of the great Lord of Lakṣmī who in the form of the child Kṛṣṇa submitted Himself to be tied to the mortar in a cowherd's house, and that too as a punishment for stealing butter as it was being churned!"[164] With the onrush of feeling engendered by thus contrasting the consort of Śrī with the cowed down, weeping child tied to a mortar, the Āḷvār became speechless for six months, and got immersed in the inward enjoyment of the lapse of the High into the low, of the Eternal into the ephemeral. 'Dāmodara' – the quality of the Lord is proclaimed in this name itself, for it means 'the One who has a string wound round His belly'.[165] The Āḷvār again says: "The easy accessibility of the Lord is so great that He without limit or discrimination is born into numerous births (*avatāras*) and that all His auspicious qualities without end get brightened in the light of His *saulabhya*."[166] The Āḷvār dwells particularly on the fact that the Great Lord reduced Himself to the status of a charioteer to Arjuna at the time of the Kurukṣetra war.[167] Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār too makes a reference to the Lord's assumption of the role of a charioteer to Arjuna – Pārthasārathi.[168] "The tender lotus-like hands inserted into and then pulled out of the pot full of butter, from

162. *Īṭṭiṉ Tamiākkam*, Vol. V. 5.10 : 1 (Commentary).
163. T.V.M. 1.3 : 1.
164. ibid. ibid.
165. ibid. 4.5 : 3.
166. ibid. 1.3 : 2.
167. ibid. 3.6 : 10.
168. Peri. Tm. 2.10 : 8. The contemplation of the Āḷvār is highly eloquent.

which He tries to eat, (Yaśodā) whipping Him with a fine string, the Lord – child in a state of fear, the red-lips curd – whitened, the cries and look of fright, the stutter of lips, the stance of prayerful cringing" – this posture of the God-child fascinates Kulacēkarāḷvār who expresses it in the words of Devaki. The Āḷvār says that Yaśodā who had the divine gift of witnessing that posture had also experienced the pinnacle of Paramānanda.[169] Nammāḷvār says: "The Lord by His *saulabhya* became the son of Nandagōpa, the cowherd as a god-sent find for him, and gave heavenly bliss to Yaśodā by turning Himself, of His own accord, into a child in her arms[170]" Thus, as the commentator points out the Lord presented the highest heavenly bliss in the form of the ordinary small pleasures of life – " Antamil pērinpattaic ciṟṟinpamākkiṉāṉ".[171] In other words, Yaśodā's Kṛṣṇānubhava was a hundred times more sweet than the bliss of Paramapada. Again the saint says: "For the sake of Pāṇḍavas who were so companionable to Thee, Thou becamest the excellent charioteer".[172] The Āḷvar avers that the Lord was so considerate as to enter the heart of such a despicable being as himself; and, what is more, to compose *Tiruvāymoḷi* from there for him.[173] Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār in the last line of every verse of one hymn has a refrain in which he contemplates the *saulabhya* of the Lord in His Kṛṣṇāvatāra in the posture of being bound by the curdmaids as a punishment for stealing curd and butter.[174] In another hymn of the same Āḷvār, a flyting is carried on between two maidens. In the first half of each verse, a maiden narrates an incident in which the Lord reduces Himself to a state of lowliness. In the second half, the other maiden counters the first by pointing out the greatness in the lowliness. As instances of the Lord deliberately attaining lowliness are mentioned Rāma's treading the rough woods barefoot, Kṛṣṇa's being brought up as a cowherd

169. Perum. Tm. 7 : 8; cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7 : 4; 2.10 : 6.
170. T.V.M. 8.1 : 3.
171. *Īṭṭiṉ Tamiḻākkam*, Vol. VIII. 8.1 : 3 (Commentary).
172. T.V.M. 8.5 : 8.
173. ibid. 10.6 : 4.
174. Peri. Tm. 10.6.

child, stealing butter and getting bound for it, His turning the messenger for the Pāṇḍavas and a charioteer for Arjuna, and His begging Mahābali for 'three foot' of land.[175] Pūtattār declares that he would address the Lord with His "great names" such as 'the one who grazed the cows', 'the one who stole the butter', 'the one who was bound with the strings', 'the one who was tied to the mortar' etc., because He would respond to these names readily because of His *saulabhya*.[176] In this connection it is worthy to note what the small names are. Āṇṭāḷ, for instance, begs forgiveness of the Lord for having addressed Him using His "small names" such as "Nārāyaṇa', 'Govinda' 'Maṇivaṇṇa' etc.[177] Nammāḷvār affirms that if one, without doubting whether Lord would be inaccessible, or accessible, or indifferent, were to believe in His *saulabhya*, in His Kṛṣṇāvatāra, He would be the role of every kind of relative.[178] "The greater our feeling for the Lord" says the Āḷvār" the more accessible He is".[179] The Āḷvār refers to a specific instance when the Lord exhibited His *saulabhya*. The devotees in Heaven were offering incense to the Lord during ablution. When the smoke of incense was screening His face, He mysteriously came down to Gokulam to take in the butter and danced between the horns of the seven wild bulls in order to win the hand of Nappiṉṉai.[180] The Āḷvār wonders at the Lord's willingness to mix freely with the devotees in Vaikuṇṭha and with the gopīs in the Gokulam without considering the status of the latter.

Sausīlya is the intimacy that grows between the infinitely great or Īśvara the infinitesimally small or *jīva*. Nammāḷvār contemplates this quality of the Lord in accommodating Brahmā and Rudra who came to Him out of self-interest in His navel and in one side of His body respectively.

175. ibid. 11.5.
176. I. Tv. 50.
177. T.Pv. 28..
178. P.Tv. 36.
179. ibid. 29.
180. T.V.R. 21, 61.

Similarly He entertained the celestials as His servants.[181] "The Lord intermingles with my heart" says the Āḻvār, "and makes me compose verses (not minding my low status)".[182] He personifies His quality as Lord Himself and addresses Him as such which fascinates his soul.[183] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār praises the Lord for His unusual gesture of good mixing in befriending Guha without any thought about his low class, his murderous career and his ignorance, but also introducing Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa as Guha's kinsfolk.[184] Similarly he praises the Lord for His love towards Hanumān with whom He was prepared to sit for dinner for his honest and devout service, without minding the fact that Hanumān was of the animal species, a monkey.[185] Saving the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile,[186] of Sumukha from the threat of Garuḍa[187], assuring the learned Brahmin of a place in Vaikuṇṭha after death,[188] allowing Mārkaṇḍeya to be ever at His feet,[189] bringing the dead son alive to his father.[190] bringing back to life the dead sons of an orthodox Brahmin after the lapse of several years[191] and instructing the king Toṇṭaimāṉ in the secret doctrines[192] prove how the Lord mixed freely with people of all ranks.

Vātsalya is the tenderness and affection that overpowers, as it were, divine omniscience and makes it forget the sinfulness of the sinner. Nammāḻvār contemplates the affection of the lion-shaped Lord who readily made His

---

181. T.V.M. 9.3 : 10.
182. ibid. 10.7 : 1.
183. ibid. 3.8 : 8.
184. Peri. Tm. 5.8 : 1.
185. ibid. 5.8 : 2.
186. ibid. 5.8 : 3.
187. ibid. 5.8 : 4.
188. ibid. 5.8 : 5.
189. ibid. 5.8 : 6.
190. ibid. 5.8 : 7.
191. ibid. 5.8 : 8.
192. ibid. 5.8 : 9.

appearance when Hiraṇya hit the pillar angrily challenging his son to demonstrate the presence of the Lord there and then.[193] He addresses the Lord in one verse as the One who swiftly removed the sorrow of the Elephant- "Ollai kaimmā tuṉpam kaṭinta pirāṉe!"[194]; he again refers to Him as Kaṇṇaṉ the cloud-hued Lord who redeemed the Elephant caught by the crocodile in a pond of fine flowers.[195] The Āḻvār revels in the Govardhana incident: he refers to the Lord as the One who lifted the mountain and held it as an umbrella to protect kine from the rain of stones;[196]; as the Prime subject of the *Vedas* who descended here on earth while His bright Form continued in Heaven in order to chastise Kaṁsa the oppressor of the good.[197] Again and again the Gajendra incident comes to the mind of the Āḻvār. Says the Āḻvār: "I salute Thee with my hands folded above my head. I lose myself in Thy love. O, the One who wiped the sorrow of the Elephant."[198] He is the Lord who relieved the heart-sorrow of the Elephant which standing in the pond surrendered itself at His feet in the belief that there was no refuge other than Himself.[199] The reference to the incident of Gajendra and Prahlāda by Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār in his Tiruvallik-kēṇi hymn is some thing eloquent. The Āḻvār refers to the Lord as One who rode the Garuḍa and rushed to wield His discus in order to relieve the distress of the Elephant of the woods it stood with its trunk uplifted in prayerful appeal, with the crocodile catching its foot, when it went into the pond to pluck fresh flowers to offer for worship to the Lord.[200] Hiraṇya hardly liked it when his school-boy son chanted the thousand names of the Lord. He, enraged with his son, hit the pillar angrily. The Lord, in the shape of a bright lion with crescent-shaped canine teeth, flaming eyes and wide-open mounth, manifested Himself.[201]

193. T.V.M. 2.8 : 9.
194. ibid. 2.9 : 1.
195. ibid. 3.5 : 1.
196. ibid. 3.5 : 3.
197. ibid. 3.5 : 5.
198. ibid. 5.1 : 7.
199. ibid. 7.10 : 8.
200. Peri. Tm. 2.3 : 9. cf. ibid., 3.8 : 2.
201. ibid. 2.3 : 8.

The Lord is the embodiment of mercy. The infinite perfections of Īśvara are dominated by the redemptive motive of *dayā*. He embodies Himself as *dayā* to redeem the *jiva*. The Lord as *dayānidhi* is the rock of love and the sole refuge of those who are immersed in desolation and distress. The quality of mercy inspires confidence in God as the God of salvation and it soothes the broken heart and the contrite spirit. The Āḻvārs revel in this quality of the Lord. It is this quality, according to all of them, that forces the cosmic ruler or Nārāyaṇa to drive nara's chariot[202] and from that chariot-seat to give utterance to the gospel of redemption.[203] It is again *dayā* that prompted the Lord to save the world from th Deluge. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār contemplates this quality in one full decad.[204] He refers to the Lord as the one who saved the earth, the heaven, the celestials, the demons and others from the unpreventable Deluge by devouring all and lodging them safely in His stomach.[205] Nammāḻvār in several verses celebrates the same quality of the Lord who churned the deep sea to get nectar for the sake of the celestials.[206] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār refers to this incident in several verses bringing out the Lord's mercy.[207] Again, Nammaḻvār contemplates the quality of *dayā* of the Lord in several verses in the incident of the Lord lifting the Govardhana mountain and protecting the cowherd settlement with its cattle from the rain of stones by Indra.[208] It is this *dayā*, according to the Āḻvārs, that is the solace of life and the solace of death and has therefore the highest claim to universality. To them, *dayā* is the soul of Bhagavān Himself, as it is the sourcc, sustenance and satisfaction of the divine nature. The deities other than Nārāyaṇa shall not be approached for mercy, as

202. ibid. 1.8: 4; 2.10: 8; 4.10: 5; 5.1: 7; 6.7: 7; 7.5: 2; 9.1: 9. 11.5: 8; Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.2: 7. I.Tv. 15; T.V.M. 4.6: 1; 7.5: 9; 8.5: 8.

203. T.V.M. 4.8: 6; 7.5: 10.

204. Peri. Tm. 11.6.

205. ibid. 11.6: 7.

206. T.V.M. 5.10: 10; 6.2: 3; 7.4: 2; 8.1: 1; 8.4: 4.

207. Peri. Tm. 1.4: 7; 3.10: 2; 6.8: 2; 8.5: 7; 8.8: 2; 10.6: 2.

208. T.V.M. 3.3: 8; 4.5: 7; 5.6: 5, 6; 5.10: 5; 7.2: 8; 7.4: 10; 7.7: 5.

209. M.Tv. 15.

any gesture shown by these deities to show pity would not yield any purposeful effect.[209]

Rectitude (*ārjva*) is one of the innumerable qualities which explains the honest behaviour of the person concerned through his dealings by thought, word and deed. God's rectitude in lifting up the Govardhana mountain enchanted the Āḻvār.[210] Śrī Kṛṣṇa stood by the cowherds and cows till Indra was forced to withdraw his spirit of vengeance. Liberality (*audārya*) of Nārāyaṇa is frequently referred to and this had made the Āḻvārs call the deity as 'pirāṉ'[211] using it together generally with the words 'rāma' and 'kṛṣṇa'. Many other qualities are there in Nārāyaṇa which have some kind of reference in the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Omnipotence[212] (*sarvaśaktitva*), true will[213] (*satya saṅkalpatva*) and others are suggested to be the qualities of Nārāyaṇa.

It appears that the Āḻvārs did not conceive of the *ṣāḍguṇya* aspect of the Lord's qualities. They were much impressed by the knowledge which is one of the characteristic features declaring the essential nature of the Lord. Their love of God must have inspired them to experience the qualities of mercy, easy accessibility and others. It is these qualities which belong to God whose essential nature is already established that became more endearing to the Āḻvārs. Nārāyaṇa's attributes, which pertain to His divine auspicious form, and the qualities which are helpful and endearing to humanity, are found to be not deficient in any thing or defective in any aspect. These are found generally to be present in other deities and men too to a far less degree than in Nārāyaṇa and highly to a limited extent. When they are not surpassed in the case of others and are found to be free from any deficiency, they attain perfection and they do so only in the case of Nārāyaṇa, the Divine Person whose essential nature explains why these are perfect.

210. T.V.M. 1.8: 4; 3.3: 8.
211. ibid. 6.1: 4; 9.6: 11
212. ibid. 1.5: 10, 1.6: 9.
213. ibid. 3.7: 7.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FORMS AND EXPLOITS OF NĀRĀYAṆA

The concept of divine perfection is open to an objection which is based on the existence of evil in the world. The prevalence of misery and suffering in one world would prove the Supreme Person guilty of partiality (*vaiṣamya)* and cruelty *(nairghṛṇya).* This charge against theism is to be met by tracing the sufferings to the moral responsibility of the selves.[1] Though this is in consonance with the True desire *(satyakāma)* and True will *(satyasaṅkalpa)* of the deity, yet the suffering self does not get any consolation from this. The school of Vaiṣṇavism brings in the redemptive grace *(dayā)* of God, which forgives the sins of the selves. It is this that explains why the Supreme Person presents Himself in a finitised form. While the self seeks to deserve this grace, the Supreme Person assumes forms to get at the self which yearns for union with Him. The forms are suited for the experience of the Self of Him and are mostly after the human pattern which is quite familiar to the self. The Supreme Person, according to Nammāḷvār, takes birth in the world in all categories of living beings for protecting them from their age-long sufferings and giving succour to them.[2] The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* mention that the Supreme Person presents Himself to the suffering humanity in five forms known as the transcendent (*para),* the grouped *(vyūha),* the divinely descended *(vibhava),* the immanent *(antaryāmin)* and the idol *(arcā).*[3] The Āḷvārs believed in this tradition which influenced them to a great extent. While giving their experience of such forms of God, the Tamil saints do not forget

1. V.S, 2.1: 34; Br. Up. 44: 5.
2. T.V.R. 1.
3. L.T. 7: 19; 50: 7 Vide: Introduction to *Lakṣmītatra* 19.

that the formless and the Cosmic Person becomes possessed of form and frequently refer to this.[4]

The transcendental state which is the highest form is expressed in such terms as Nārāyaṇa, Parabrahman and Para-Vāsudeva. This is the self-realized absolute having the super-essential qualities of *satyam* (truth), *jñānam* (light), *anantam* (infinity), *amalam* (goodness), and *ānandam* (bliss). He is the Eternal of eternals which is formless, changeless, and transcendental. He lives in the city called Vaikuṇṭha in Paramapada where "matter exists without its mutability, time exists as eternity, and the *mukta* lives without the moral limitations of *karma*".[5] The divine city is guarded by the city-watchers such as Kumuda, Kumudākṣa, Puṇḍarīka, Vāmana, Saṅkukarṇa, Sarvanētra, Sumukha, etc., who are equipped with divine weapons, ornaments, attendants and other paraphernalia.[6] Nārāyaṇa is seated in a pavilion of gems on a couch in the form of the serpent *Śeṣa* placed on the throne having eight legs such as *dharma* and others in the *mahāmaṇimaṇṭapa* within the divine abode attended by the gate-keepers such as Caṇḍa, Pracaṇḍa, Bhadra, Subhadra, Jaya, Vijaya etc. He is the possessor of a divine auspicious figure adorned with divine ornaments such as crown and others. He is four-armed, equipped with the divine weapons such as conch, discus and others. He is accompanied by Śrī, Bhū, and Nīlā. His presence is being enjoyed by the eternals such as Ananta, Garuda, Viṣvakśena etc., and other *Sāma*-singing liberated souls. It is with this state of God that the finite self attains union. The *Upaniṣads* glorify the transcendental beauty of Brahman as *paraṁjōtis*.[7] Paramapada is the highest world beyond which there are no higher worlds with the highest Person of infinite splendour in the supreme world of eternal glory or *nityavibhūti*[8] of which this phenomenal world (*līlā-vibhūti*) is only a partial expression due to

4. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 5.
5. *The Philosophy of Viśistādvaita*, p. 154.
6. *Yat. Dip.* IX- 17.
7. *Mun. Up.* 2.2: 9, 10.
8. *Ch. Up.* 3. 13: 7.

His *yōga-māya.* Nammāḷvār refers to God in this form: 'the permanently great and the first and foremost of the celestials''[9]; "the Lord reclined on the bed of the five mouthed snake''[10] ''the One Who reigns in Vaikuṇṭha''[11]; "Nārāyaṇa the Lord of the seven worlds'';[12]; "the One Who became Trinity and the foremost of the Trinity''[13]; ''intense effulgence descended''[14]; "the sole Lord who enjoys varied pleasures without hindrance, the one who is sugar-candy, honey, nectar, milk, fruit, sugar-cane for three worlds, One Who wears honey-secreting basil coronet in His head''[15]; "the Lord of the celestials''[16]; "the foremost of the heavenly who wields the sword, the mace, the conch, the discus and the bow";[17] and "the Lord Who has His abode in Vaikuntha and Who is worshipped by all the gods in temples'' [18]

Perfection in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha does not afford much scope for the Supreme Person to display His *dayā*, there being none to suffer from any malady. Besides, this place is beyond the limits of the material world and so could not be visited by any mortal. The Lord therefore takes up His abode in the milky ocean which lies within the material world. The gods invariably proceed there headed by Brahmā whenever they are in distress.[19] In the *vyūha* state (grouped form) Brahman the absolute becomes Īśvara the God-head Who is the ground of the universe as its creator, preserver and destroyer. The metaphysical absolute becomes Vāsudeva, the perfect, to satisfy the meditational needs of the *mumūkṣu* and for the creation of the universe. He manifests Himself

9. T.V.M. 1.9: 4.
10. ibid. 2.1: 6.
11. idid. 2.6: 1.
12. ibid 2.7: 2.
13. ibid. 3.6. 2.
14. ibid. 3.7: 1.
15. ibid. 3.10. 3
16. ibid. 4.5: 2
17. ibid. 7.2: 6.
18. ibid. 8.6: 5.
19. Peri. Tm. 4.3: 4; V.P. 1.9: 38; 5.1: 31.

as Saṅkarṣaṇa with the two qualities of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bala* (strength), as Pradyumna with the two qualities of *aiśvarya* (lordship) and *virya* (virility) and as Anirudda with the two qualities of *śakti* (potency) and *tejas* (splendour) without any dimunition of Divinity. This, however, does not mean that each *vyūha* has only its two respective qualities, but each *vyūha* is Viṣṇu Himself with His six qualities of which two only in each case become manifest. The *vyūha* Vāsudeva is the same as the transcendent form of the Lord and replete with all the six qualities.[20] The other three are named after the elder brother, the son and the grand-son respectively of Kṛṣṇa. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of these *vyūhas* in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming the souls. With Saṅkarṣaṇa, creation assumes an embryonic form; through Pradyumna the duality of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* makes it first appearance; and finally, Aniruddha enables the body and soul to grow. As regards the process of redemption, Saṅkarṣaṇa promulgates *Ekānti mārga* (monotheism), Pradyumna helps its translation into practice *(tat-kṛiya)*, and Aniruddha brings about the fruit of this practice *(kriyā-phala)* which is liberation.[21] The Āḻvār refers to Him as "Vētam muṉ virittāṉ"[22] – 'the first Unfolder of the *Vedas*' and as "Paṉpuṭai vētam payanta paraṉ"[23] – 'the Lord who created the beautiful *Vedas*'. Regarding the destruction of the universe the saint refers to as "Pālanāy ēḻ ulaku uṇṭu"[24] – 'a child who devoured the seven world'. In the history of the adventure of the souls occur certain epochs of moral crisis, when egoism becomes so inflated and sinfulness becomes so iniquitous that Īśvara in His infinite mercy withdraws the instruments of evil and thus arrests the wrong-doers from their career of crime and sin.[25] This is called *pralaya* and has a soothing effect on the self. Pradyumna creates the universe and introduces all

20. *Yatin. Dip.* IX. 19; cf. L.T. 6: 25.
21. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, pp 37-39.
22. T.V.M. 2.10: 10.
23. ibid. 6.6: 5.
24. ibid. 4.2: 1.
25. *Dayāśataka-16*.

dharmas. Sṛṣṭi is also a redemtive process and after the refreshment of *pralaya*, the *jiva* wakes up to moral activity, enters on a new life. He is given a fresh opportunity for attaining freedom. The withdrawing and delivering the universe, as it were, thus reveal the redemptive mercy of the Saviour and cosmology is to be reinterpreted as a philosophy of redemption. Nammāḷvār revels in these two aspects. The Āḷvār says: "Jñālam muṟṟum umiḻnta Nārāyaṇaṉē"[26] – 'Nārāyaṇa who released the whole universe from His mouth'; "Muṉṉīr jñālam paṭaitta em mukil vaṇṇaṉē"[27] – 'the cloud-hued Lord who created the sea-girt world'; "Muṉ ulakaṅkaḷ ellām paṭaitta mukil vaṇṇaṉ"[28] – 'the cloud-hued Lord who created the ancient worlds". Sometimes both the withdrawal and the deliverance are referred to in one and the same verse. The Āḷvār says: "Oruṅkākavē ulakēḻum viḻuṅki umiḻntiṭṭa peruntēvaṉ"[29] – 'the great Lord who had swallowed and released the seven worlds together.' Again this involution and evolution of the universe are spoken of by other Āḷvārs also; in fact, they have a strong appeal to their minds.[30] Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār revels in this incident in one full decad.[31]

Each one of these four *vyūhas* descends into three sub-*vyūhas*. Vāsudeva hypostatizes into Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava; Saṅkarṣaṇa into Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana; Pradyumna into Tirivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara; and Aniruddha into Hṛṣīkesa, Padmanābha and Damodara. These twelve tutelar deities are the presiding deities of the sun in the twelve mouths of the year. The names of these twelve deities are recited by the pious Hindus every day. There is a hymn by Nammāḷvār which goes by the name of

26. T.V.M. 4.3: 6.
27. ibid. 3.2: 1.
28. ibid. 6.8: 1. cf. 7.1: 9; 7.6: 1; 8.10: 7. cf. Tc.V. 30
29. ibid. 4.6: 4. cf. 9.3: 2; 10.2: 3. cf. Tc V. 28.
30. *Periyāl Tm.* 2.6: 6; 4.1: 9; 4.3: 9. *Perum. Tm.* 8.7. Tc.V. 10, 12, 22, 28, 30, 31, 105. A.P. 9. *Peri. Tm.* 1.8: 6; 1.10:3; 2.2: 5; 2.4: 6; 2.9: 4; 2.5: 1; 3.1: 3; 3.9: 3; 3.10: 3; 4.1: 5, 6; 4.8: 6; 4.10: 5; 5.4: 2; 5.7: 9; 5.9: 2; 5.10: 2; 6.1: 5; 6.6: 1; 7.2: 4; 7.8: 10; 8.10: 2; 9.2: 9; 9.9: 3.
31. Peri. Tm. 11.6.

'Pannniru tirunāmap-pāṭṭu'[32] the recitation of which leads us to the God's lotus feet. A hymn of Periyāḷvār containing the advice to people to name their children with the names of the Lord bears some of these names.[33] Another hymn celebrating the piercing of the lobes of the ears of child Kṛṣṇa contains these twelve names. Yośoda addresses Him with the names in the hymn.[34] Again the images of the Lord are distinguished to represent these twelve forms by varying the order and arrangement of the appurtenances held in the four hands of each image.

The third state of Brahman is *Vibhava* which is the descent of Īswara among beings by means of forms similar to that genus. "It is the embodiment of the redemptive working of the *rakṣaka* in the moral will of humanity with a view to recovering it from its sinfulness". "It is a periodic invasion of *kṛpā* into all species and into the history of humanity, when evil trumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life",[35] in order to arrest the progress of social disruption, redeem the sinner from his sinfulness, and commune with the devotee who thirsts for His living presence."[36] The ten principal descents are Fish (*Matsya)*, Tortoise (*Kūrma)*, Boar (*Varāha*), Man-Lion (*Narasimha*), Dwarf (*Vāmana*), Parasurāma, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin.[37] The redemptive grace of *Vibhava* is realized in the recovery of *Vedas* from its destroyers, the extraction of immortality (nectar) from the waters of life, the maintenance of cosmic order and the law of righteousness and the living assurance of salvation to all being.[38] According to *Viṣvakśena-saṁhita* and *Lakṣmitantra*

32. T.V.M. 2.7.
33. *Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.6.*
34. ibid. 2.3.
35. *The philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 156.
36. Bh.G. 4:7,8
37. According to *Ahibudhnya-samhitā*, avatāras are thirty-nine; they are thirty-nine according to the *Sāttavata-saṁhitā* also. But *Yatindra mata Dīpika* following Varavaramuni admits thirty-six avatāras only, since Kapila, Dattātreya and Parasurāma are supposed to be secondary avatāras.
38. Yatin. Dip. IX. 23.

all the *avatāras* descend from the fourth *vyūha*, viz., Aniruddha. But *Pādmatantra* declares that of the ten *Vibhavas*, '*Matsya*, *Kūrma* and *Varāha* descend from Vāsudeva; Narasimha, Vāmana, Śrīrāma and Parasurāma from Saṅkarṣaṇa; Balarāma from Pradumna, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin from Aniruddha.'[39]

Among the *avatāras* of the Lord, some get meagre and brief references because of the short time of His stay in that form and the particularly the smaller number of persons who alone were intended to be favoured by that form of the Lord. The *Matsya* descent has therefore a brief reference.[40] The Kūrmāvatāra has more references.[41] Through the form of Parasurāma, He destroyed the insolent kṣatriyas.[42] The descent Varāha, Vāmana-Tirivikrama, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have frequent references in the works of the Āḻvārs. Even the first three Āḻvārs, the earliest of the Āḻvārs, refer to these *avatāras* in their poems[43] thereby proving the popularity of the worship of the several of them prior to the period of Āḻvārs. As regards varāha *avatāra*, Nammāḻvār says: "Perunilam Kīṇṭavaṉ"[44] – 'the one who burrowed and dug out the earth'; "Poḻil ēḻum ēṉam oṉṟāy nuṉiār kōṭṭil vaithāy"[45] – 'in the form of a Boar You poised the seven worlds on Your tusk'; "Maṉ-maṭantai poruṭṭu ēṉam āy āti am kālattu akal

39. *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*, p. 48.
40. T.V.M. 1.8: 8; 2.8: 5; Peri. Tm. 5.4: 8; 6.8: 2.
41. ibid. 2.8: 5; 7.1: 7, Peri. Tm. 5.3: 6; 5.4: 8; 8.4: 4.
42. ibid. 6 2: 10; Peri. Tm. 3.2: 5; 3.4: 5; 6.2: 7.
43. For these five avatāras, respectively be referred to: (i) M.Tv. 2, 9. 25, 39, 91; I.Tv. 30, 31, 47: Mu. Tv. 45, 54. (ii) M.Tv. 3, 14, 17, 20, 21, 48, 50, 79, 84, 100; I.Tv. 5, 10, 18, 23, 30, 34, 36, 47, 52, 61, 71. 78, 87, 91, 99; Mu. Tv. 4, 6, 9, 13, 18. 20, 23, 34, 36, 40, 41, 47, 49, 52, 58, 83, 90, 93. (iii) M.Tv. 17, 23, 25, 31, 36, 40, 90, 93; I.Tv. 18, 84, 94. 95; Mu. Tv. 31, 42, 49, 65, 95. (iv) M.Tv. 23, 27, 35. 59; I.Tv. 15, 25, 29, 43, 79, Mu. Tv. 51, 52. (v) M.Tv. 8, 11, 18, 22, 23, 27. 34, 39, 54, 62, 86, 92; I.Tv 8, 15, 19, 23, 28, 49, 62, 63, 68, 89, 92, 93, 98, 100; Mu. Tv. 21, 28, 29. 32, 34, 41, 42, 43, 47. 48, 49, 51. 54, 60, 65, 68, 71, 74, 80, 85, 91, 98.
44. T.V.M. 1.7: 6.
45. ibid. 2.3: 5.

iṭam kīṇṭavar"[46] – 'for the sake of Goddess Earth, You descended in the form of a Boar and brought out by digging the vast space'; "Ēṉam āy nilam kīṇṭa eṉ appaṉē"[47] – 'my Lord who in the shape of a Boar brought out the earth'; "Niṉ tiru-eyiṟṟāl iṭantu nī koṇṭa nilamakaḷ kēḷvaṉē"[48] – 'the Lord of Goddess Earth whom You dug out by Your tusk'; Āḻap-perum puṉal tāṉṉuḷ aḻuntiya jñālattait tāḻappaṭāmal taṉpāl oru koṭṭiṭait tāṉ koṇṭa kēḷal tiru uru āyiṟṟu"[49] – 'in order to rescue the earth from submerging, He in the form of a Boar balanced it on His tusk,; "Kōla varākam oṉṟāy nilam kōṭṭiṭaik koṇṭa entāy"[50] – 'in the form of a fine Boar You carried the earth on Your tusk'. There are references to this *avatāra* in his other works also.[51] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār beautifully expresses the grandeur and majesty of this *avatāra*. He says :

"Cilampiṉ iṭaic ciṟu paral-pōl periya mēru
tirukkūḷampil kāṇakaṇappa tiru ākāram
Kuluṅka nilamaṭantai taṉai iṭantu pulkik
kōṭṭiṭai vaiṭṭaruḷiya kōmāṉ" – [52]

This can be translated as : 'The Lord who, with Mount Mēru jingling like a trinklet within the anklet between His hooves, with Lakṣmī tossed about within His bosom, scooped up Goddess Earth, embraced and placed Her on his tusk'. The English rendering, however, hardly does justice to the beauty of the sentiments expressed, or of the eloquence of the language employed, by the Āḻvār.

Innumerable references are found regarding *Vāmana – Tirivikrama avatāra* in the Āḻvār's works. The Āḻvār says : "Perunilam kaṭanta nal aṭip-pōtu ayarppilaṉ alaṟṟuvan taḻuvuvaṉ vaṇaṅkuvaṉ"[53] – 'I shall tirelessly utter the name

46. ibid. 4.2: 6.
47. ibid. 5.7: 6.
48. ibid. 7.2: 9.
49. ibid. 7.5: 5.
50. ibid. 10. 10: 7.
51. T.V.R. 45, 99; P.Tv. 7, 42.
52. Peri. Tm. 4.4: 8.
53. T.V.M. 1.3: 10.

of, embrace and bow my head, to the lotus-feet which measured the whole world'; "Pulaṉ koḷ māṇāy nilam koṇṭāṉē"[54] - 'the One Who acquired the earth as a youth (brahmachari) who had conquered the seuses'; "Oru māṇik kuṟaḷāki nimirnta karumāṇikkam"[55] - 'the Dark Gem which expanded Itself from the state of a short youth'; "Ulakēḷum ōr mūvaṭi koṇṭāṉāi"[56] - 'taking the seven worlds in three strides'; "Mēltaṉṉai mītiṭa nimirntu maṇ koṇṭa māl-taṉiṉ mikkum ōr tēvum uḷatē"?[57] - 'Is there a Lord greater than the One Who acquired the Cosmic form and got the earth for Himself'; "Tirukkuṟaḷā"[58] - 'the great Dwarf!'; "Maṇ koṇṭa vāmaṉaṉ"[59] - 'the short One Who acquired the earth'; "Ulaku aḷantāṉ"[60] - 'World-measurer'; "Ulkam koṇṭa aṭiyavaṉ"[61] - 'the One Who took the world in his strides'; "Aṉṟu orukāl vaiyyam aḷanta pirāṉ"[62] - 'the Lord Who once measured the world'; "Aṭiyai mūṉṟai iranta āṟum āṅkē niṉṟu āḷkaṭalum maṇṇum viṇṇum, muṭiya īr aṭiyāl muṭittuk-koṇṭa mukkiya-mum"[63] - 'the begging for three footsteps of land, and then taking in just two strides the deep sea, the earth and the heaven'; "Māṇpu amai kōlattu em māyak kuṟaḷarku"[64] - 'the mysterious Dwarf with handsome shape'; "Maṇṇum viṇṇum makiḷa kuṟaḷāy valaṅkāṭṭi, maṇṇum viṇṇum koṇṭa māya ammāṉē"[65] - 'O Lord Who acquired the form of the Dwarf to the delight of earth and heaven and acquired by treading both earth and heaven'; "Kuṉṟu ēḷ pār ēḷ cūḷ kaṭal ñālam muḷu ēḷum, niṉṟē tāviya nīḷ kaḷai āḷit tirumālē"[66] - 'O Lord who in

54. ibid. 1.8:6.
55. ibid. 1.10: 1.
56. ibid. 1.10: 5.
57. ibid. 2.2: 3.
58. ibid.2.6: 1.
59. ibid. 3.8: 5; 4.7
60. ibid. 4.4: 8.
61. ibid. 5.3: 5
62. ibid. 5.4: 10
63. ibid. 5.10: 9.
64. ibid. 6.6: 9.
65. ibid. 6.9: 2.
66. ibid. 8.3: 8.

your stationary position stood astride the Seven mountains, the Seven worlds surrounded by sea, and the universe'; "Ivvulakam mūṉṟum uṭaṉ niṟaiya ciṟumāmēṉi nimirtta eṉ centāmaraikkaṇ tirukkuṟaḷaṉ"[67] - 'the lotus-eyed handsome Dwarf who filled with His small body expanded into cosmic largeness all the three worlds'; "Kuṉṟāmal ulakam aḷanta aṭiyāṉai"[68] - "the One Who completly taking the whole world in His stride'. After measuring the earth and the heavens with His feet, He puts His Foot on the head of Mahābali for the third step. The emphasis of the Āḷvār is that is the joy of the Lord in touching His children - all living beings in this act of measurement. The idea of inspiring the future generations with hope and love through and by this story is important. Reference to this *avatāra* are also found in his other three works.[69].

The Āḷvār, when referring to *Narasimhavatāra*, says: "Iraṇiyaṉ akal mārvam kīṇṭa eṉ muṉṉaik kōḷariyē"[70] - 'O Lion Who tore the broad bosom of Hiraṇya'; "Kiḷar oḷiyāl kuṟaivu illā ari uruvāyk kilarantu eḻuntu, kiḷar oḷiya iraṇiyaṉatu akal mārpam kiḻittu ukanta, vaḷar oḷiya kaṉal-āḻi valampuriyaṉ"[71] - 'the One with the brightening fire-spitting discus and the conch Who, vigorously rashing in the form of Man-Lion enjoyed the tearing of the bright bosom of Hiraṇya; "Allal amararaic ceyyum iraṇiyaṉ ākattai mallal ari uruvāy ceyta māyam"[72] - 'the deed which He, in the form of the fighting Lion, performed on the chest of Hiranya who persecuted the *Devas*'; "Kaṭuttapōr avuṇaṉ uṭal iru piḷavāka kaiukir ānṭa em kaṭalē"[73] - 'my Lord Who with Your hand-nails tore in two the body of the fighting demon'; "Cempoṉ ākattu avuṇaṉ uṭal

67. ibid. 8. 10: 3.
68. ibid. 9 4: 10.
69. T.V.R. 38, 42, 58, 76, 79, 85. T.V.C. 5, 6 P. Tv. 8, 16, 20, 27, 42, 61.
70. T.V.M. 2 6: 6.
71. ibid. 4.8: 7.
72. ibid. 7.5: 8.
73. ibid. 8.1: 3.

kīṇṭavaṉ"[74] – 'the One Who tore the golden-red bosom of the demon'. References to this *avatāra* are found only in *Periya-tiruvantāti*[75] and not in other two works.

The Āḻvār enjoys the contemplation of *Rāmāvatāra* in his works. He says: "Nīḷ kaṭal cūḻ ilaṅkaik kōṉ tōḷkaḷ talai tuṇi ceytāṉ"[76] – 'One Who hewed down the head and shoulders of the king of Lanka girt by the vast seas'; "Ilaṅkai ceṟṟavaṉe"[77] – 'O the Destroyer of Lanka.'; "Ilaṅkaiyai nīṟē ceyta neṭuñcuṭar cōti."[78] – 'the effulgent Light which burnt Lanka to ashes'; "Kompupōl cītai-poruṭṭu ilaṅkai eri uyttavar"[79] – 'the One Who sacked the city of Lanka for the sake of Sītā, tender like a delicate creeper'; "Matil ilaṅkaik kōvai vīyac cilai kuṉittāy"[80] – 'You Who discharged the arrow from the bow to fell the king of walled Lanka.'; "Kiḷimoḻiyāḷ kāraṇamāk kilar arakkaṉ nakar eritta kaḷimalart tuḻāy alaṅkal kamaḻ muṭiyaṉ"[81] – 'the One with the honey-secreting fragrant basil coronet Who sacked the city of the bright demon for the sake of the one with the sweet voice of the parrot'; "Pēreyil cūḻ kaṭal teṉṉilaṅkai ceṟṟapirāṉ"[82] – 'the Lord Who burnt up the Southern Lanka surrounded by big ramparts and the seas'; "Āṉ tiṟal mīḷi moympiṉ arakkaṉ kulattait taṭintu, mīṇṭum avaṉ tampikkē viriṉīr ilaṅkai aruḷi āṇṭu-tam cōti pukka amar ari ēṟu"[83] – 'the celestial Lion which wiped out the race of the manly and formidable demon, and vouchsafed the island of Lanka to his brother, and then entered the Realm of Light there'; "Tayaratan peṟṟa marakata maṇi"[84] – 'the sapphire gem-like son of

74. ibid. 9.10: 6.
75. P.Tv. 11,66.
76. T.V.M. 1.6: 7.
77. ibid. 2.4: 4; 5.7: 2.
78. ibid. 2.9: 10.
79. ibid. 4.2: 8.
80. ibid. 4.3: 1.
81. ibid. 4.8: 5.
82. ibid. 7.3: 7.
83. ibid. 7.6: 9.
84. ibid. 10.1: 8.

Daśaratha'. The Āḷvār's other works also allude to this *avatāra*.[85]

Inordinate love is evinced towards *Kṛṣṇāvatāra*. No other *avatāra* of the Lord exercised such a fascination over the saint's mind. The very thought of the birth of the Lord, the manner in which He grew up and how He managed the Great war of *Mahābhārata* melt his soul.[86] He is delighted to speak of the various exploits of Kṛṣṇa and He actually revels in them.[87] In other places the Āḷvār says: "Vañcappēy vīyat tūya kuḷaviyāy viṭap-pāl amutā amutu ceytiṭṭa māyaṉ"[88] - 'the mysterious One Who as a cherub drank like nectar the poisonous milk of the false demoness and sucked her to death': "Eṅkaḷ āyar koḷuntē"[89] - 'the true Sprout of our cowherds.'; "Vem mā vāy kīṇṭa cem mā kaṇṇaṉē"[90] - 'O Kṛṣṇa with the large reddish eyes Who tore the mouth of the terrible horsedemon'; "Okkalai vaittu mulaip-pāl uṇ eṉṟu tantiṭa vāṅkic cekkam ceka aṉṟu avaḷpāl uyir ceka uṇṭa perumāṉ"[91] - 'the Lord Who when placed in her arms and offered milk by the female demon sucked her to death so that the very (bad) thought may end with her'; "Uṟikkoṇṭa veṇṇai pāl oḷittu uṇṇum ammāṉ"[92] - 'the Lord Who ate (and drank) the butter and milk stored in the suspender'; "Kāmpu aṇai tōḷ piṉṉaikku āy ēṟu uṭaṉ ēḷ ceṟṟatuvum"[93] - 'the One Who mastered the seven bulls and married Nappiṉṉai with shoulders like bamboo-sprouts'; "Malaiyai eṭuttu kalmāri kāttu pacunirai taṉṉait tolaivu tavirtta pirāṉ"[94] - 'the Lord Who lifted the mountain, and protected the herds of cows against the hailstorm of stones'; "Vampu aviḷ kōtaiporuṭṭā

85. T.V.R. 36, 77,92; P.Tv, 64.
86. T.V.M. 5.10: 1.
87. ibid. 6.4.
88. ibid. 1.5: 9.
89. ibid. 1.7: 2.
90. ibid. 1.8: 2.
91. ibid. 1.9: 5.
92. ibid. 2.3: 8.
93. ibid. 2.5: 7.
94. ibid. 3.5: 3.

mālviṭai ēḻum aṭartta cempavaḷat tiraḷ vāyaṉ"[95] – 'the Lord Who with his coral lips quelled the seven bulls for the sake of the damsel like a garland emitting fragrance'; "Cātu caṉattai naliyum kañcaṉaic cātippataṟku āti am uruvai aṅku vaittu iṅkup piṟanta vētamutalvaṉ"[96] – 'the Originator of the *Vedas* Who left His orignal form in Heaven and was born here to destroy Kamsa who afflicted the innocent'; "Paṭarpukaḻp pārttaṉum vaitikaṉum uṭan ēṟat tiṇ tēr kaṭavi cuṭar oḷiyāy niṉṟa taṉṉuṭaic cōtiyil vaitikaṉ piḷḷaikaḷai uṭalōṭum koṇṭu koṭuttavaṉ"[97] – 'the One Who ascended the chariot in the company of the reputed Pārtha and the orthodox brahmin and from His effulgence in Vaikuṇṭha restored the sons in flesh and blood to the brahmin'; "Pōrppāku tāṉ ceytu aṉṟu aivarai velvitta māyap-pōrt tērppākaṉār"[98] – 'the mysterious Charioteer Who brought out a war and made the Five (Pāṇḍavas) win'; "Cāyak kuruntam ocitta tamiyaṟku, māyac cakaṭam utaitta maṉāḷaṟku, pēyaip piṇampaṭa pāl uṇ pirāṉukku"[99] – 'to the One Who felled the kurunta tree, who kicked away the mysterious cart, and who sucked to death the female demon'; "Maṉ añcap pāratattup pāṇṭavarkāp paṭai toṭṭāṉ"[100] – 'the One Who ventured to wield His weapon to the terror of the kings, for the sake of the Pāṇḍavas of Bhārata". More references to this *avatāra* are also found in his other poems *Tiruviruttam*[101] and *Periya Tiruvantāti*.[102]

Nammāḻvār fancies that the Lord ate in days of yore the seven worlds and kept them in His stomach and ejected them later. Some mud, which is one of the constituents of earth must have remained in the stomach. The Lord found delight in taking butter perhaps thinking that it may serve as a medicine to dissolve that mud.[103] There is frequent refe-

95. ibid. 3.5: 4.
96. ibid. 3.5: 5.
97: ibid. 3.10: 5. cf. 6.4: 9 and Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.5: 7.
98. ibid. 4.6: 1.
99. ibid. 6.6: 8.
100. ibid. 10.6: 4.
101. T.V.R. 8, 21, 38, 74, 78. 86.
102. P.Tv. 6, 12, 14, 18, 31, 38, 48, 54, 64
103. T.V.M. 1.5: 8.

rence to the dance of Kṛṣṇa with the pots.[104] This is known as *kuṭakkūttu*.[105] Kṛṣṇa danced in between the horns of seven bulls which He controlled and thus won the wager to get the hand of Nappiṉṉai.[106]

Balarāma, though He was an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and was also an *avatāra* of Nārāyaṇa, receives meagre treatment at the hands of the Āḻvārs,[107] perhaps His activities getting overshaddowed by those of Kṛṣṇa.

The mysterious powers of Kṛṣṇa are referred to by Nammāḻvār. The flawless and brilliantly lustrous frame of the Lord remained unchanged when He came down to earth as Kṛṣṇa. He was born among men who are immersed in sorrow; yet He remained untainted by the impurities of the inhabitants of Gokulum with whom He moved very freely. By coming visible to all people, He made His divinity felt in the world. His divine perfection remained in tact during this *avatāra*.[108]

The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain references to some other minor descents of God. A demon Somukha by name took away the four *Vedas* and disappeared in the flood of waters which filled the earth. Nārāyaṇa took the form of fish, killed that demon by tracing him inside the waters and appeared as the swan before Brahmā and imparted the *Vedas* to him. This is an incident relating to God's descent as Hamśa.[109] The gods, who were immersed in darkness when the *Vedas* were stolen, prayed to and praised Nārāyana. Thereupon, the Lord took the form of the swan.[110]

---

104. T.V.R. 38; Peri. Tm. 2.5: 4; Periyāḷ. Tm. 2.7: 7.
105. Vide for details Appendix III.
106. T.V.R. 21.
107. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.7: 5.
108. T.V.M. 3:10: 6.
109. Peri. Tm. 5.1: 8.
110. ibid. 5.3: 8; Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.8: 10.

The *avatāras* Varāha, Vāmana, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have frequent references in the works of the Āḷvārs and frequency of the last two *avatāras* is still greater, the reason perhaps being that these two *avatāras* took birth seemingly like ordinary mortals, lived with them for a longer period and had contacts in the day to day life whereas the other *avatāras* were for a specific purpose at particular periods and when the purpose was fulfilled they disappeared. Yet the *Varāha avatāra* involves the acquisition by the Lord of his own consort in the shape of the earth which is the region of *karma*; the *Vāmana avatāra* resulted in the Lord's feet touching the whole of the earth and thereby all the selves in the world and emancipating them; and the *Narasimha avatāra* was itself for redeeming the wrong done to a devotee as though to prove that *Bhāgavata apacāra* is a move heinous sin than *Bhagavat apacāra.* For these reasons, these three *avatāras* too come in for large attention at the hands of the Ālvārs.

The fourth state, namely, the immanent form of God is *antaryāmin*, the indwelling self in the region of the heart. The Lord in this form stays with the individual self as its friend in its states of experience such as heaven, hell etc., and is perceptible only to the *yogins*. The moral idea of Īśvara taking this form is for making the *jīvas* pulsate with their creative life and participate in their inner joy and for making the mortal selves immortal. Though He co-exists with the individual self, He is untouched by the taints inherent in the latter. The *Upaniṣad* in its classical exposition of Brahman in this form defines His nature, immanence and intimacy in the following terms : "He who, dwelling within the self, is different from the self, whom the self does not know, of whom the self is the body, who rules the self from within, He is thy Self, the Inner Ruler Immortal".[111] The Upaniṣadic analogy of two birds on the same tree, of the shining one above, and the suffering one below, becoming united in the end is more sublime and appropriate.[112] Nammāḷvār refers to this form

111. Br. Up. 5.7 : 22 (Mādhyadina reading).

112. Mu. Up. 3.1 : 1. This verse is quoted from R.V. 1.164: 20; repeated at Sv. Up. 4: 6; cf. Kath. Up. 3 : 1.

in his *Tiruvāymoḷi.* He says: "Tān oṭṭi vantu entani neñcai vañcitta ūn oṭṭi ninru en uyiril kalantu"[113] - 'He came of His own accord, fascinated my lone heart and incorporated Himself in my body and my soul'; "Māyan en neñcil uḷḷān"[114]- 'the Mysterious One is in my heart'; "Tānum yānum ellām tannāḷḷē kalantoḷintōm, tēnum pālum neyyum kannalum amutum ottē"[115] - 'He and I became One within me (Him?) as honey, milk, ghee, cane-sugar, and nectar all being mixed'; "Enatu āviyuḷ kalanta peru nal utavikku kaimmāru enatu āvi tantoḷintēn"[116] - 'as return for the great, good help of getting communed in my soul I have given up to You my soul itself'; "Muḷu ēḷ ulakum unṭān ukantu vantu aṭiyēn uṭpukuntān"[117] - 'the One Who ate up all the seven worlds came affectionately of His own accord and entered my soul'; "Yātu avaṅkaḷum cērkoṭēn enru ennuḷ pukuntu iruntu tītu avam keṭukkum amutam"[118] - 'the nectar-like One Who in order to preclude any kind of harm coming to me got into me and stationed Himself there and undoes all harm'; "Mēlāt tēvarkaḷum nilat tēvarum mēvit toḷum mālār vantu inanāḷ aṭiyēn manattē manninār"[119]-'the mysterious Lord, worshipped by the highest of the celestials and the devotees of this world, this day has lodged Himself in my heart'; "Veḷḷaic curi caṅkinōṭum āḻi ēnti tāmaraik kannan en neñcinūtē puḷḷaik kaṭākinra ārral kāṇīr"[120] - 'contemplate the mode of the lotus-eyed Lord with His white involute conch and discus riding on Garuḍa into my heart'; "Enrum eppōtum en neñcam tutippa uḷḷē irukkinra pirān"[121] - 'the Lord Who is within me and Whom my heart worships for ever and ever'; "Ukantē unnai uḷḷum

---

113. T.V.M. 1. 7: 7.
114. ibid. 1.9: 5, 6. The Āḻvār in this hymn finds the Lord in every one of his limbs and organs.
115. ibid. 2 3: 1.
116. ibid. 2.3: 4.
117. ibid. 2.6: 7.
118. ibid. 2.7: 3.
119. ibid. 5.1: 8.
120. ibid. 7.3: 1.
121. ibid. 7.10: 6.

eṉ uḷḷattu akampāl akamtāṉ amarntē iṭam koṇṭa amalā"[122] – 'O the pure One, Who made a home for Yourself in my inner being which longingly hankers after You'; "Nīrmaiyāl neñcam vañcittup pukuntu eṉṉai, īrmai ceytu eṉ uyirāy eṉ uyir uṇṭāṉ"[123] – 'the One Who has merged with me, life into life, by fascinating my heart and entering it through His generosity and making it tender'; "Eṉ neñcattu uḷ iruntu iṅku iruntamiḻ nūl ivai moḻintu, valneñcattu iraṇiyaṉai mārpu iṭanta vāṭṭaṟṟāṉ"[124] – 'the Lord of Tiruvāṭṭāṟu Who tore off the chest of the hard-hearted Hiraṇya, and Who stationing Himself within my heart composed great Tamil works'; "Tāmaraikkaṇ eṉ ammāṉ nilaipērāṉ eṉ neñcattu eppōtum"[125] – 'my lotus-eyed Lord will never shift from my heart'. In one hymn the Āḻvār gives an elaborate description of every limb and organ of the Lord with all His divine appurtenances, as He has become one with himself.[126] Again in one verse the saint envisions the Deity of Tirucciṟṟāṟu at Tiruccenkuṉṟūr as occupying his mind and heart with every one of His limbs and organs.[127] In another verse he feels the presence of the Lord within himself in the body, with His large red-lined eyes, His coral lips, the white shining pearl-like teeth and prominent tossing ear-rings cloud-hued and brightly crowned, with four shoulders bearing the bent bow, the white conch, the mace, the sword and the discus.[128]

The Supreme Lord has entered into the self and does not leave it. Probably the hills like Tirumalai and Tirumāliruñcolai, the noisy ocean and Vaikuṇṭha have been discarded as worthless (lit. straw) for His stay.[129] That the Āḻvār is conscious of His stay within himself is stated. He is not

---

122. ibid. 9.4. 1.
123. idid. 9.6: 3.
124. ibid. 10.6: 4.
125 ibid. 10.6: 6.
126. ibid. 2.5.
127. ibid. 8.4: 7. cf. Peri. Tm. 7.3: 7.
128. ibid. 8.8: 1. Peri. Tm. 3.5.
129. P.Tv. 68. cf. Peri. Tm. 8.9: 5 where the Lord is stated as not intending to leave the heart of the Āḻvār.

worried about anything, since he had kept Him steadfast in his heart.[130] This realization is said to result by listening to the *Vedic* passages which speak about Brahman. The Lord has entered within the Āḷvār through his ears. He refers to himself as having become great. In as much as the Āḷvār has the Supreme Person within himself, the Āḷvār asks the Lord to reflect and find out how He could still be great.[131] The Lord has entered into the mind of the Āḷvār and stands there, sits there, lies there and moves about there. Yet He is not satisfied with all this and so has not left it.[132]

The fifth state of God is the permanent incarnation of *arcā* worshipped in temples, houses, villages, towns, sacred places and hills. The *para* and *vyūha* forms of the Lord are beyond the reach of the denizens of this *terra firma*. All the living beings have not been gifted to live in times when the Lord chose to come down as *avatāras*; owing to lack of *jñāna* and *bhakti* they are not able to see the over-present *antaryāmin* in them. Hence the only alternative left to people is to resort to the *arcā* form to satisfy the spiritual longings and aesthetic cravings.[133] This *arcā* consists of idols or images, made of gold, silver, or any material chosen by the worshipper. The belief is that God in the forms of Supreme Vāsudeva (*para*), the *vyūhas*, and the *vibhavas* descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that He may be easily accessible to His devotees. In this manifestation, God, out of His condescension, chooses to will that He seem entirely in the hands of His worshippers, hiding His omniscience and omnipotence, or seeming the very reverse of these in His worshippers' hands. God Supreme (*para*) is experienced in this form. Idols are permanent incarnations, and reservoirs

130. ibid. 70.
131. ibid. 75.
132. ibid. 35.
133. 'Āgamūrti' is the name given to the arcā form of the Lord by Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār (Tc.V. .7). It is the corrupted from of 'Yāgamūrti' which is suitable for worship. It may also be conceived as the form which the Lord Himself has assumed by His divine will or *saṅkalpa*.

of redemptive mercy. "*Arcā* is not the idealised projection of creative imagination touched by religious feeling nor the symbolic expression of the infinite in the finite".[134] It is but the descent of God Himself as the embodiment of His accessibility in the world of mortals. The infinite God enters into finite forms without the loss of His infinity and Īśvaratva for communing with the devotee that longs for His contact and for infinitising his religious consciousness. The Āḷvārs had a genius for intuiting the *arcā*. They had direct sight of Him. Their inspiring utterances serve to invite humanity to share in the mystic rapture of such divine communion. Bhagavān Saunaka has said: "Having shaped a beautiful image of Viṣṇu with a lovely face and lovely eyes, out of gold, silver and the like in a manner that would be pleasing, one should adore it, bow to it, sacrifice to it and meditate on it. By doing so, one would enter into that form which is none other than Brahman and will have all one's sins dispelled".[135]

This kind of experience is illustrated by the commentators with reference to an incident in the life of a Vaiṣṇavite.[136].

---

134. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 208.

135. V. Dh. 103: 16.

136. An anecdoto has been recorded by the commentators of *Tiruvāymoḷi* regarding the experience of God in this form. A Viṇṇappam ceyvār (devotee) used to carry his nut-wallet with him; in it he had kept his *Saligrama*-image as his eonstant companion. When, by accident, the tiny marble-like image, mixed up with the nut (which he ate) entered his mouth, he would feel the hardness of the marble differing of course from the nut. He would then reverentially take it out, wash it in water he had in his vessel, dry it with his robe, dress it, and taking cymbals in his hand sing a song of praise from St. Nammāḷvār and then lull it to sleep again in his nut-wallet. This confusion often happened to him. A Vaiṣṇavite of ritual type (more than of love to God) often observed this. To him it was blasphemous. He went to the ceyvār and asked him to present his "desecrated marble-God" to him. The ceyvar gladly transferred his Holy Property. The Vaiṣṇavite took it home, and worshipped it with all the strict details of ceremonial worship, enjoined for such occasions. The Image appeared to him in his

The *arcā* form of God is the only form which is easily accessible to His devotees at all times. Piḷḷailōkācāryār makes the following comparisons with the five forms of God: the attempt to comprehend the transcendent form is like getting water from the other world for quenching thirst; the *vyūha* form is like the legendary ocean of milk which also is not easy of access; the descended forms are like the occasional floods that inundate the country for a while, but do not last long; the immanent form is like subterranean water which is not readily available to a thirsty man although it is right underneath his feet; and the *arcā* is like the pool which remains stationary after occasional freshes pass away and from which anyone at any time could slake his thirst.[137] This may be the reason why the Āḻvārs have preformed self-surrender to this form of the Lord which is the reservoir of divinity and redemptive mercy. According to yogi S. Parthasarathi *arcāvatāra* has the following advantages: (i) It is reachable by our senses and the mind; (ii) hence it produces a desire for godliness; (iii) as soon as such a desire is produced, it at once serves as a Means to lead us to the apogee of spiritual greatness; (iv) it serves to inspire the virtues of piety and love for God; and (v) it gives us an opportunity even while we are in the midst of our world-enemy to practise service, which we aim at performing in reality when we reach Heaven and there are face to face with God. Our St. Nammāḻvār had, while he contemplated the manifestations of the Lord in His *arcā* form at several holy places presented to his consciousness the several auspicious attributes of God as Holy subject for his meditation.[138]

---

dream and spoke thus: 'Fool, I was happy in the temple of my ceyvār's nut-wallet, - ceyvār to whom Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāymoḻi* is his life and soul. I had the felicity of becoming bathed in the nectar-like saliva of his holy mouth. I had the delight too of listening to the sweet canticles from the Āḻvār's which he warbled to me. But you have deprived Me of this happiness and subject Me to all the tedious trials of thy formal worship'. The Vaiṣṇavite was by this dream put into great trepidation. He ran to the ceyvār forthwith and restored to him his *Saligrama*. (Vide: Bag. Viṣ. Book VI 6.8: 1 "*Vantiruntu*" (Commentary).

137. S.V.P. First part, Sūtra 39.

138. *Divine wisdom of the Dravida Saints* - pp. 195-196. Foot note (b). cf. A.H. Sūtras (159-186).

The *Sāstras* like *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* postulate God as a certain Being in one place, and hand Him down to us in another place, in the form of vivid Idols which, according to them, He has Himself chosen of His free will to make His special abodes. Once the omnipresence is conceded to God, it must logically follow that the Idol which is intended to visibly personify Him for the pleasure of His devotees must also contain Him. The efficacy of the consecrating *mantras* is said to be so potent that once the installation is duly performed, the Idol acquires abnormal, and super-natural powers. If by mere sight of certain Idols, as for example the one at Tirumalai, or the taking of vows with respect to certain others, as for example, the one at Cōḷasimhapuram, certain phenomena occur which cannot be rationally explained or explained away with reference to any known theories of science or other laws, it must be admitted that the idols do have life to a certain extent or in a certain measure. To see Him fully manifested in the Idol is not to deny Him in other places, or in other forms. It is only seeing Him intensely at that place. One should meditate on the Lord's placing Himself at the disposal of those who seek His protection in a manner which cannot be understood by the mind or described in words, for it has been said, "Whoever wants to see Me and in whatever form, to him I reveal Myself in that very form";[139] as Poykaiyāḷvār says, 'He assumes the form desired by His devotees' - "Tamarukantatu evvuruvam avvuruvam tāṉē".[140] He should also meditate on the alluring beauty of the Lord of which Tiruppāṇāḷvār says: 'The eyes that have seen the Lord will refuse to see other thing's.[141]

The *Nālāyiram* is the treasure of experience or *anubhava* of the Tamil religious Seers who have uniformly sung in praise of the idols in the several sacred spots. Their sayings most emphatically and unambiguously point to the fact that they were not praising an abstract God, or His attributes in the abstract, but a personal living God, who to

139. Bh. G. 4: 11.
140. M.Tv. 44.
141. A.P. 10.

those saints stood personified in the piece of stone, wood or copper before them. Almost all the Āḷvārs have uniformly sung the praises of the presiding deities in the several sacred spots situated throughout length and breadth of our holy land. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār alone has sung about eighty-six *Divya-Desas* out of the total of one hundred and eight situated from Badari in the north to Tiruvaṇparicāram in the south. It has been rightly pointed out and emphasized by later *Ācāryas* that the hymns of this Āḷvār which constitute more than those of other Āḷvārs put together are particularly intended to inculcate and enhance the enjoyment of the *arcā* forms of the Lord in the temples. It was left to this Āḷvār to prove to the world that in each of the five forms of God the manifestation is full and complete and that there is no gradation among them, one leading to the other; and also how it is possible to get out of *arcā* form here and in this world the same bliss that the Eternals in Vaikuṇṭha are said to obtain in the transcendental form which is beyond the human ken. Otherwise, how else can one account for the Āḷvārs' breaking their hearts over the pose or poise of the Lord at each of the several shrines? They saw the Lord in flesh and blood residing in the Idol. One can recall here the experience of Tiruppāṇāḷvār whose eyes, bewitched, as they were by the glory of the Lord's form travelling slowly from foot to head and drinking deeply from the fountain of Beauty and Grace. It is even said that with Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār one of the most living and life-like of Idols held a conversation transgressing even the self imposed limitations of *arcā*. While at Kumbakonam worshipping in the shrine of Sāraṅgapāṇi Perumal (the '*ārāvamatu*' of Nammāḷvār), enraptured at the restful pose of that beautiful God, asked Him the reason for it: "Do the legs ache because of excessive walking (the earth from end to end as Rāma)? Or did the body get shaken far too much while You delved this trembling earth in the form of a Boar? What is the reason for Your lying down and resting in Kuṭantai on the banks of the Kāviri which spreads itself far and wide after crossing all the hills and dales that came in her way? Won't You rise up and speak?"[142] At this request

142. Tc. V. 61.

made in a submissive tone and beautiful poetry, it is said, that this Lord lifted up His head and attempted to rise from His serpent couch. The Āḻvār moved by this graciousness on the part of the Lord at once sang 'Vāḷi kēcaṇē' meaning "Thou with beautiful locks of hair! May Thou livest long and undistrubed!" The Lord stayed as He was at that moment. To this day the Idol is seen as one lying down with head slightly raised (*uttānasāyee*) and seemingly most ready to open Its lips.

The *arcā* forms, as they are enshrined in temples, reveal two aspects of God's relation to man. Nārāyaṇa takes that particular form which His devotee desires to visualise.[143] Hence there is a large amount of difference in the postures of the images in the various shrines. The Paurāṇic versions[144] make this clear by declaring that the Lord appeared in a specific form before a sage or a king who was devoted to Him. The other aspect is that the principal (*mūla)* image in the shrines is made of stone dark in appearance, in all probability, to conform to the *Upaniṣadic* statement that Brahman has the blue *ākāśa* as its body.[145] The temples together with the images principal and the other ones as those taken out in procession during festivals came into existence before the period of the Āḻvārs. Hence the frequent reference in their compositions to the complexion of God as bearing semblance to the sea,[146] water-laden cloud[147] and blue sapphire.[148]

The Āḻvārs, who were mad with love for God, had great veneration to the sacred places, hills and shrines. They bowed to those places[149] which is suggestive of specific impor-

143. M.Tv. 44.

144. Peri. Tm: 2.2. For instance. vide: Mark. P. Tiruvevvuḷūr Mahātmya ch. 1 to 11.

145. Taitt. Up. 1.6: 2.

146. T.V.M, 3.6: 10, 7.3: 11.

147. Tc. V. 120; Peri. Tm. 1.9: 10; T.V.M, 7.2: 11.

148. Mu. Tv. 59: Nan. Tv. 47.

149. Vide: Peri. Tm. 1.5; 1.8; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 5.10; 6.4: 8.6; 9.7; 9.8. T.V.M. 2,10,

tance which such places have enjoyed during their periods. The Tirumalai, Tirumāliruñcōlai, Tiruvaraṅkam, Tirukkaṇṇapuram, Tirukkuṭantai, Tiruvehkā and others have relatively larger number of verses sung in praise of these deities. Tiruvaraṅkam has the credit of having the verses from all the eleven Āḻvārs. Tirumalai comes next with ten Āḻvārs' verses. Seven Āḻvārs extolled Tirukkuṭantai. Tirukkaṇṇapuram, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Pāṭakam and Tiruvehkā have each the verses of five Āḻvārs. The other shrines which are hundred and one in number have songs of a relatively less number of Āḻvārs.

The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain here and there enumeration of some shrines on certain principles. The Lord measured the worlds with His feet and perhaps of having stood for a time He became tired and therefore sat down in Vēḻukkai in Kāñcipuram and lay down in Tiruvehka also at Kāñci.[150] He is lying down on Ādiśeṣa in Tirukkuṭantai, Tiruvehkā, Tiruvevvuḷūr, Tiruvaraṅkam, Tiruppērnakar, Aṉpil and Milky ocean.[151] The Lord is standing in Tirumalai, seated in Viṇṇakar, lying in Tiruvehkā and is walking in Tirukkōvalūr.[152] The strain of churning the milky ocean made the Lord perhaps lie down in Tiruvehkā, sit at Pāṭakam, and stand in Tiruvūrakam, all in Kāñci.[153]

The four compositions of Nammāḻvār contain in all 1296 verses of which 395 are devoted to the praise of the *arcā* forms of God. The traditional scholars treat all the verses of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* as dedicated only to the deity at Śrī Raṅgam. This is not, however, borne out by the availability of decads in the *Tiruvāymoḻi* in praise of the *arcā* forms in thirty-two shrines other than Śrī Raṅgam. The Āḻvār treats of the nature of the Supreme Person in the first two centums[154]

---

150. Mū. Tv. 34.
151. Nāṉ. Tv. 36.
152. M. Tv. 77.
153. Mu. Tv. 64. This order is reversed in Tc. V. 63 and 64.
154. These contain sixteen verses in praise of *arcā*.

much in the manner of the *Upaniṣads* and so draws little reference to the *arcā* form here. The third and the fourth centums, which treat the nature of the self, contain a little more reference, suggesting the relatedness of the self to God in *arcā* form [155] The fifth and the sixth centums deal with the means of getting at God and the verses on the images contained here[156] lay stress on the need for worshipping the *arcā* form of the Lord. The verses in the next two centums,[157] show how through the *arcā* worship, the obstacles in the path of attaining God are removed. Those in the last two centums[158] show clearly that the goal could be reached here itself, namely, experience of direct communion with the Lord. This could be achieved mainly through the worship of the *arcā* form of God.

Nammāḷvār sang in praise of thirty-three sacred places out of which seventeen[159] were sung only by him. These seventeen and six more shrines[160] (which were sung by other Āḷvārs as well) are all situated in the Tirunelveli District of the Tamil Nadu and in the adjoining areas of Kerala State. Of the remaining ten, Vaṭamaturai and Tuvarai (Dvārakā) lie in the north, Tirumalai lies at the southern extremity of the Andhra Pradesh, Tirumāliruñcōlai and Tirumōkūr in the Madurai District, Tiruvehkā at Kāñci and the remaining four in Thañjavoor District of the Tamil Nadu. Of all these Tirumalai is the only shrine on which the Āḷvār sang sixty-two verses. The next one which attracted his attention in importance was Tirumāliruñcōlai which was being celebrated by forty-six verses. (Vide Appendix IV for the list of *arcā* forms of God celebrated by Nammāḷvār with actual number of verses on each.)

---

155. There are fifty eight verses here.
156. One hundred and twenty two are found here on the *arcā* form.
157. Seventy-one verses are found here on the idol.
158. There are one hundred and eighteen verses here.
159. Most of these are treated in the sixth, seventh, eighth and nineth centums.
160. These are treated mostly in the fifth, eighth and nineth centums.

While expressing his surging love and devotion for the *arcā* form of the Lord in certain shrines the Ālvār does not fail to take note of the religious and ritualistic atmosphere prevailing in those places where some of the shrines are situated. Such references which the saint offers reveal the extent to which the culture of the *Vedas* and the religious practices prevailed in those places mostly situated in the southernmost regions of South India. Vāṉamāmalai, as known at present, is Śrīvaramaṅkalam where lived persons proficient in the four *Vedas*[161] Those persons, who were of perfect knowledge, performed the *Vedic* rituals.[162] Another shrine called Tentiruppēreyil is said to be ever resonant with the recitation of the *Vedas* and the din and bustle of the festivities.[163] The *Vedic* rites[164] were ceaselessly performed here and the *Sāma-Veda* was chanted.[165] The Āḷvār-Nayaki loses all her bashfulness and reticence to the enchanting figure of the Lord.[166] Tiruccenkuṉṟūr Tiruccirrāṟu is a shrine where lived three thousand Brahmins deeply learned in the *Vedas*.[167] The smoke to which fragrance is imported by the oblations offered into the fire, rises up high in the sky screening the sun.[168] Those Brahmins adore the deity from all directions.[169] They are liberal minded, individually reputed and have their knowledge equalled only by their spotless conduct.[170] The sound of the recitation of the four *Vedas* fill the places where the shrines Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr,[171] Tiruvallvāḷ[172] and Tirukkaṭiṭṭāṉam[173] are situated. The holy smoke rising

161. T.V.M. 5.7: 3.
162. ibid. 5. 7: 4, 7, 9.
163. ibid 7.3: 1.
164. ibid. 7.3: 6.
165. ibid. 7.3: 4.
166. ibid. 7.3: 3.
167. ibid. 8.4: 6.
168. ibid. 8.4: 5.
169. ibid. 8.4: 8.
170. ibid. 8.4: 9.
171. ibid. 6.1: 2, 4.
172. ibid. 5.9: 3. where the *Sāmaveda* was recited.
173. ibid. 8.6: 10.

from the fire fills the areas of Tiruvallavāḷ[174] and Tiruvanvaṇṭūr.[175]

The Lord of the Tirupati Hills is praised by Nammāḻvār in sixty-two-verses. Eight verses of *Tiruviruttam* portrays the mystic experience of the Āḻvār who, as the bride of the Lord, experiences the pangs of separation from Him.[176] The deity at Tirumalai is visited by gods, men[177] and sages,[178] and Śiva, Brahmā and Indra who bring with them the members of the family for worshipping the Lord.[179] The Lord Is present there with Śrī[180] as the parents of the world.[181] In those Hills the Lord has manifested Himself with all His glory and splendour. 'It is our duty to render spotless service at His feet for all times to come' - "Oḻivil kālamellām uṭanāy manni, vaḻuvilā aṭimai ceyyavēṇṭum nām".[182] In this connection the Āḻvār expresses anxiety about the past that has gone by and that has not been fruitful. He cannot get it back, but he is afflicted with the thought that it has been a waste. He does not want the very thought of the waste that has taken place. So he resolves to devote the rest of his life for austerity and devotion to the Lord of the hills. He says that the devotees recite the manifold names of the Lord at Vēṅkaṭam of north with cascades of cool waters in such a frenzy that others call them mad.[183] "When there is my Lord" says he, "father-like and elephant-like at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the haunt of murmerous bees, I will not compose verses on my tongue to any human being".[184] The depiction

174 ibid. 5.9: 3, 5.
175. ibid. 6.1: 2.
176 T.V.R. 8, 10, 15, 31, 50, 60, 67, 81.
177. T.V.M. 1.8: 3.
178. ibid. 6.10: 4.
179. ibid. 6.10: 8.
180. ibid. 6.10: 10
181. idid. 2.6: 10.
182. ibid. 3.3: 1.
183. ibid. 3.5: 8.
184. ibid. 3.9: 1.
185. ibid. 3.3.

of the Lord is *Upanişadic* in purport.[185] The divine auspicious from is never lost sight of.

The Āḷvār celebrates in forty-six verses his communion with the Lord at Tirumāliruñcōlai. When he celebrates the Lord of Tiruppērnakar he could not avoid making reference to his realisation of communion with the Lord of Tirumāliruñcōlai.[186] The Lord at Tiruppēr-nakar, the Lord who is lodged at the Hill of Tirumāliruñcōlai, has entered into his heart saying that He would stay there (for ever).[187] He refers to the deity of the place who lodged the three worlds in His stomach, who is merciful towards generation after generation from time immemorial, who is beyond the reach of Brahmā and Śiva who praise Him has vouch safed Grace on him.[188] Even though he casually mentioned the name of the Hill of Tirumāliruñcōlai as one of the series of hills, Tirumāl rushed and filled his heart because accidentally he uttered His name '*Tirumāl*' an element in the name of the Hill.[189] He advises the people of the world to pay a visit to the Hill before the bubbling youthfulness passes away[190] and circumambulate the temple daily.[191] He is captivated by the beauty of the deity of the place and says: "Has the lustre of Your face blossomed forth as the lustre of Your crown? Has the lustre of Your feet blossomed forth as the lotus on which You stand?"[192] The self shall entertain a desire to go on a pilgrimage to such a place.[193]

Tiruvaraṅkam is praised by the Āḷvār in one decad. The mystic experience of the Āḷvār, as the bride of the Lord, is treated here, depicting the pangs of separation from the

---

186. ibid. 10.8.
187. ibid. 10.8. 6.
188. ibid. 10.7: 6.
189. ibid. 10.8: 1.
190. ibid. 2.10: 1.
191. ibid. 2.10: 8.
192. ibid. 3.1: 1.
193. ibid. 2:10.

Lord which is experienced by the Āḷvār.[194] The Sleeping Beauty at Tirukkuṭantai is shown as love in corporeal form with all divine perfections and qualities of unsurpassed excellence.[195] The auspicious and divine form of the Lord is described as present in Tiruviṇṇakar which is enriched in natural and material prosperity. The Lord's glory is admirably shown to consist in the pairs of many opposites which are mutually incompatible but could subsist only in Him.[196] The huge, lofty ramparts, dashed by the waves of the sea, mark the shrine at Tirukkaṇṇapuram wherein the Supreme Person presents Himself to the selves, grants refuge to those who perform self-surrender, and emancipation after their death. The only way open for the devotees to get rid of the sufferings of the world is the worship of His feet with flowers.

The Āḷvār's direct experience of the Lord in many shrines near his birth place produced an indelible and deep impression that he is reminded of the divine enchanting form of the Lord and yearns to have direct experience after the manner of His bride.[197] He prefers to send messengers to the Lord.[198] The feeling of separation is much intense in the background of the pleasant natural surroundings of the Tāmpraparaṇi river and of the prosperous life in certain places where the shrines are situated.[199] That there is no refuge apart from the Lord is stated repeatedly by the Āḷvār who had communion with Him whose divine figure refuses to leave his heart.[200] Much stress is laid on the significance of the name Kāḷamēkam of the deity at Tirumōkūr,[201] and Ātippirāṉ at Tirukkurukūr.[202] The graceful looks which the

194. ibid. 7.2.
195. ibid. 5.8.
196. ibid. 6.3.
197. ibid. 5.5; 5.9; 6.5; 7.3; 8.9.
198. ibid. 6.1; 9.7.
199. ibid. 5.7; 6.5.
200. ibid 7.2; 8.4.
201. ibid. 10.1.
202. ibid. 4.10.

Āḷvār received compel him to wish to offer service to the Lord in many shrines.[203] The saint has a call to Tiruvāraṉviḷai. He is eager to settle with all his filial devotion, circumambulate the temple and lift up his hands in prayer,[204] the diety will have to be sprinkled with sweet-smelling water and he will walk round the temple and offer his worship;[205] he will pray to the deity every day for all times to come;[206] once he gets an opportunity to worship round the temple, all his sins will vanish;[207] his deep thoughts are to reach the temple and pray the deity round the sanctum;[208] once he has become a slave to the Lord, He will be able to know whether all his thoughts were not centred on Him and Him alone.[209] The Āḷvār requests the Lord at Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi to set His eyes on and say a few words to the devotees "who have been for generations doing service in Your temple through Your grace and the grace of Lakṣmī from times immemorial''.[210] In the conception of the Āḷvar, the presiding deity at Tiruvananta-puram is the same as the Lord at Paramapadam and the divine service at one is as important as at the other. The Lord there is majestic in reclining posture;[211] those who worship Him with flowers are those that are the most virtuous;[212] those who reach His lotus feet attain the status of the Eternals;[213] those who get a chance to sweep and clean the temple yard will get rid of their worst sins;[214] those who offer worship with sweet smelling flowers and incense will be bereft of their sins;[215] those who worship Him with sandal paste,

---

203. ibid. 7.10; 9.2; 9 6: 9.8; 10.2.
204. ibid. 7.10: 1.
205. ibid. 7.10: 2.
206. ibid. 7.10: 3
207. ibid. 7.10: 8.
208. ibid. 7.10: 9.
209. ibid. 7.10: 10.
210. ibid. 9.2: 3.
211. ibid. 10,2: 1
212. ibid. 10.2: 4.
213. ibid. 10,2: 5.
214. ibid. 10.2: 7.
215. ibid. 10.2: 9.

light, and incense along with select lotus flowers for daily prayer will be entitled to immortal greatness.[216] The Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi is referred to as the soul of all and as the consort of Śri.[217] The Āḻvār-Nāyaki has lost her heart to the Lord who is seen by her in her vision with all His appurtenances.[218] The delectable experience which the Āḻvār had in some places is recollected with much gratefulness to the Lord for His grace.[219] The Lord at Tiruvāṭṭāṟu has ordained that the Āḻvār after giving up his worldly attachment should serve Him incessantly. He that had ripped open Hiraṇya in His Narasimhāvatāra has stationed Himself as *seṣa-sāyee* at Tiruvāṭṭāṟu conveying a message that those who surrender to the Great can be sure of unexpected rewards.[220]

One whole hymn is devoted to stress on the easy accessibility of *arcāvatāra*. The Āḻvār assures the men of the world that the *arcā* form of the Lord is indistinguishable from Śrīman Nārāyaṇa of Vaikuṇṭha and that if this form *(arcā)* is contemplated Śrīman Nārāyaṇa Himself responds to the prayer [221] In all these aforesaid five states Bhagavāṉ is ever present with Śrī; this import is established by scripture and other means of knowledge.[222] In these varied forms He creates, maintains and destroys all, is also the giver of *mokṣa* and has such other activities. These activities of His are, as it were, due to the over-flow of His bliss or *ānanda*. Again, the five forms of God are equally real in the philosophical sense, though from a point of view of religious value each succeeding manifestation may be more valuable to the devotee. Knowledge and other attributes of God are not in the least affected when any of these forms is assumed.[223] It

216. ibid. 10.2: 10.
217 ibid. 1.10: 9.
218. ibid. 5.5.
219. ibid. 8.6; 10.6.
220. ibid. 10.6: 10.
221. ibid. 3.6.
222. Yat. Dip. IX. 29.
223. L.T. 2: 60.

is God's will that brings into existence these forms which are of pure *sattva*. The Lord takes up these forms to protect the good people and establish righteousness.[224] Consequently, all these forms have equal importance and significance. Hence the Āḷvārs are found to treat an *arcā* form as indentical with the *vibhava* or *para* form. All these or some among them are said to be same as the Indweller. The Lord who lies in the ocean is Keśava, the destroyer of the demon Keśin. He lies in Tirukkuṭantai wearing a gem-set crown. He is the protector of the cows.[225] The primeval Lord of the gods, who measured the entire world, leaving no inch of land has become born among the cowherds.[226] The Lord who lies on Ādiśeṣa in the milky ocean and is in yogic slumber, takes in the worlds at the time of deluge, lifts up the Govardhana for protecting the people.[227] It is the Lord whose chest is ever occupied by Śrī that became Govinda and removed the deformity of the hunch backed woman.[228] The Lord who lifted up the earth from the waters is permanently stationed in Tirumalai,[229] which place He reached after measuring the earth and He is the same as the Lord who lifted up the Govardhana to protect the kine and cowheards from torrential rain of pebbles [230] He punished Bali, made the demon Bāṇa become submissive by cutting of the thousand arms and killed Kamsa.[231] He who tore open the beak of the crane, passed through the twin Maruta trees making them fall down, and controlled the seven fierce bulls has taken His dwelling in Śrīvaramaṇkalam (Vāṉamāmalai).[232] The Lord who brought the earth out of the waters, who acquired the name Keśava by killing Keśin, who killed the elephant Kuvalayapīḍā and who,

224. Bh G. 4: 8.
225. T.V.M. 10.9: 7.
226. T.V.R. 61.
227. ibid. 74.
228. T.V.M. 1.5: 5.
229. ibid. 1.8:3
230. ibid. 3.3: 8.
231. ibid 3.8: 9.
232. ibid. 5.7: 9.

being beyond the comprehension of gods, lies in the ocean, has come very near to Nammāḷvār.[233] Nārāyaṇa who withdrew the earth during deluge, released it at the time of creation, measured it at one time, and raised it at another from the waters, had coronation as the Lord of the earth, ruled it and married Bhūdevi.[234] The Lord who is in Paramapada stands in Tirumalai, sleeps in the ocean and moved about in the world in His divine descents. He remains unseen within all objects and is staying in the mind of the Āḷvār.[235] He created the earth, lifted it up from the waters, kept it within the stomach during involution, released at the time of evolution, and measured it as Tirivikrama.[236] All these forms have been assumed by the Lord only to protect the world and the beings inhabiting it from difficulties.[237] The Āḷvār's attempt to offer a synthesis between these forms is aimed at to prove that the Lord is only one, though for the specific reasons which prompt Him to appear differently at different times.

The Āḷvārs revel in the exploits of Nārāyaṇa both in the transcendental state and in the states of *avatāras*. Periyālvār says :

"Uṉṉuṭaiya vikkiram oṉṟu oḷiyāmal ellām
Eṉṉuṭaiya neñcakampāl cuvarvaḷi eḻutik-koṇṭēṉ"[238]

– 'I have frescoed in my heart all thy exploits without exception'. He celebrates the heroism of the Lord in His Narasimha,[239] Varāha,[240] Rāmā[241] and Kṛṣṇa[242] *avatāras*

233. ibid, 1.9. 2.
234. ibid. 4.5: 10; 8.1: 5.
235. ibid. 6.9: 5. All the five forms of God are mentioned here.
236. T.V.C. 6.
237. T.V.R. 1.
238. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.4: 6.
239. ibid. 1.5: 2; 1.6: 8; 2.7: 7; 4.8: 8.
240. ibid. 2.10: 9; 3.5: 5; 4.8:8.
241. ibid. 1.6: 8; 2.6:8; 3.9: 6; 4.1: 3; 4.2: 2; 4.3: 8; 4.7: 1 etc.
242. ibid. 1.5: 5; 1.5: 2; 1.5: 4; 1.9: 9; 2 5: 2; 2.5: 5; 3.6: 4; 4.3: 2; 4.8:1; 4.8: 2 etc.

revelling the manifold exploits in them. The incidents of devouring the worlds by the Lord,[243] and the churning of the ocean by Him,[244] are extolled by this Āḷvār. The hurling of Namuci, the son of Bali, in the air is praised by him.[245] Almost all the Āḷvārs praise the incidents of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa more in their poems than those of other *avatāras*.

Nammāḷvār celebrates in his poem the Lord's exploits. The Lord who, though reclining on the small banyan leaf, could lodge within Himself the seven worlds,[246] and again "Our Kaṇṇaṉ swallowed the earth, heaven and all".[247] He portrays the churning of the ocean by the Lord: "O my Lord, Thou churnedest the ocean with the snake with the two ends held by the Devās and the Aśuras and Thou heldest aloft the Mantara mountain".[248] When referring to the Lord of the three strides, he says that from being a midget He became the titanic Supreme Lord.[249] He delineates the episode of the three demons facing the Lord, one of them, Māli, getting killed and the other two getting pushed into the nether world.[250] He mentions the Hiraṇya incident. "O the lion-shaped Lord! Thou torest asunder the boom of Hiraṇya who entertained insulting thoughts about Thee".[251] The axe-wielding Lord, in the form of Parasurāma, rooted out the Kṣatriya race for twenty-one generations.[252] The Lord hacked down the shoulders and heads of the lord of Laṅka begirt with the seas.[253] He caused Laṅka to be set on fire, consigned

---

243. ibid. 1.2: 13; 2.7: 9; 4.1; 9. 4.3: 9. etc.
244. ibid. 1.6: 10; 2.2: 9.
245. ibid. 1.8: 8; 2.5: 9; 2.10: 7.
246. T.V.M. 2.2: 7. cf. ibid. 1.8: 7; 2.1: 10; 2.3: 4.
247. ibid. 2.2: 1.
248. ibid. 7.1: 7.
249. ibid. 1.10: 1
250. ibid. 7·6: 8.
251. ibid. 2.6: 6. cf. ibid., 4.8: 7; Peri. Tm. 3.3: 8.
252. ibid. 6.2: 10. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7: 2; 7.2: 7; 7.6: 2; 8.5: 8; 8.8: 6; 9.1: 6; 11.4: 6.
253. ibid. 1.6: 7.

to the flames.[254] He hit the seven trees (*marāmaram*) set in a zig-zag order with a single arrow.[255] "My Lord" says the Āḷvār, "lifted up the great earth"[256] and again, "My Lord Keśava in the form of a Boar poised the whole earth on the tusk".[257] The Lord reclines on the earth; He is seated on it; He stands upright on it; He devours it; He spits it out; He embraces it in the form of His consort.[258] This incident of lifting up of the earth by the Lord in the form of a Boar is celebrated by Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār in a beautiful picturesque language.[259] The Āḷvār evinces inordinate love towards *Kṛṣṇavatāra* and so he takes a keen interest in mentioning the exploits of Kṛṣṇa frequently in his hymns. The smiling, red-lipped Lord who sucked the breast of the demoness (*Pūtana)*, kicked away the demon in the form of the wheel, uprooted the maruta trees by walking in between them, tore apart the mouth of the horse-demon, and slew the elephant (*Kuvalayāpidā)*.[260] He held aloft the Govardhana mountain effortlessly.[261] He subdued the seven ferrocious bulls.[262] He cut off the thousand arms of Bāṇāsura.[263] The Āḷvār celebrates the incident in which the Lord set the demon in the form of a calf on the demon in the shape of a wood-apple tree and dispatched them both at once[264] and also the slaying of the two wrestlers Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika and Kamsa too.[265] He delineates the Lord's ascending into the Heaven in the company of Arjuna and the orthodox Brahmin and bringing back and restoring to the Brahmin his four sons placed in

---

254. ibid. 2.1: 3. cf. ibid. 2.6: 9.
255. ibid. 1.7: 6.
256. ibid. 1.7: 8.
257. ibid. 1.9: 2.
258. ibid. 2.8: 7.
259. Peri. Tm. 4.4: 8. cf. ibid., 3.4: 3.
260. T.V.M. 5.3: 8. cf. ibid. 1.8: 2; 1.9: 2; 1.9: 5; 2.1: 8; 2.1: 10; 2.10: 10; 4.8: 3.
261. ibid. 1.8: 4.
262. ibid. 1.8: 7; 2.5: 7; 2.9: 10; 5.7: 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.4: 4.
263. ibid. 2.4: 2; 3.4: 10; 3.8: 9; 4.8: 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7: 2.
264. ibid. 7.3: 5.
265. ibid. 8.4: 1. cf. ibid. 3.8: 9.

Heaven in exactly the same state in which they were born.[266] Most of the exploits of the Lord in *Kṛṣṇavatāra* are narrated in one hymn–the lifting of the mountain, the subduing of the serpent Kāḷiyaṉ, the slaying of the wrestlers, and of the elephant, of Pūtana and of Sakatāsura, the cunning disposal of Kamsa, and of the demon in the form of a crane, the subduing of the bulls, the uprooting of the tree into which the demon entered, the cutting down of the Bāṇa's shoulders, the acquisition of the earth as Vāmaṇa, the rescuing of the four sons of the orthodox Brahmin, and the conduct of Bhārata war.[267] Similarly Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār also, in one hymn, celebrates the exploits of Kṛṣṇa.[268] The incident in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa brought and planted the *Pārijāta* tree from the land of the Devas for the sake of His consort Satyabhāma has been celebrated both by Periyāḷvār and Tirumaṅkai-yāḷvār in their hymns.[269]

The Āḷvār allots one full hymn to a commemoration of the Lord's exploits: each verse to a description of a particular accomplishment. The cosmic dimensions of the Lord with all His accoutrements in Tirivikramāvatāra striding the earth are outlined.[270] The phenomenal noise and impact of movement and counter movement produced at the time of churning the ocean are brought out.[271] The delicate poising achieved by the Lord at the time of having up the earth in the form of a Boar is portrayed.[272] The chaotic dissolution into which He cast the Universe while devouring it at the time of Deluge is indicated.[273] The unprecedented noise caused by him at the time of the Bhārata war with soldiers fighting and the Devas watching is referred to.[274] The strength of the impact

266. ibid. 3.10: 5; 6.4: 9.
267. ibid. 6.4. cf, ibid. 5.10.
268. Peri. Tm. 7.4.
269. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.9: 9; 3.9: 1: Peri. 3.4: 8; 4.6: 8.
270. T.V.M. 7.4: 1.
271. ibid. 7.4: 2.
272. ibid. 7.4: 3.
273. ibid. 7.4: 4.
274. ibid. 7.4: 5.

involved in the killing of Hiraṇya in Narasimhāvatāra is described.[275] The exploits of the Lord during the war with Rāvaṇa are depicted.[276] The Lord's direct facing and hacking down of Bāṇāsura and defeating of Subramanya, Agni and Śiva are portrayed.[277] The Lord's creation of the elements, the stars, and planets, and all forms of life, all in a trice, is wondered at.[278] The way the Lord lifted up and held as an umbrella the Govardhana mountain for the protection of the cows and cowherds is traced.[279]

The Āḷvār gets himself lost in admiration while recounting how the Lord whose mouth[280] is described to be very huge for eating the world, kept it within His stomach and lies like a very small child on the tiny banyan leaf. He sleeps there for a long time. This state of childhood is peerless and could not be imagined.[281] Of all these forms, the significance of the Lord using Garuḍa as His vehicle requires to be mentioned. An elephant had once quenching its thirst by drinking water in a deep pond. Its legs were seized by a crocodile. The elephant put up a tough fight and tried to extricate itself from the clutches of the crocodile, but with no result. It then realised the futility of its personal endeavour and remembered the *mantra* which it was taught in the previous birth and shouted it out in dire distress. The Lord at once started on His vehicle Garuḍa hurried to rescue the elephant. He killed the crocodile with the discus. There were several poets like Pōtana[282] who were stuck with admiration at this ever readiness of the Lord to rush for protecting the devotee, and depict Garuḍa and weapons running swiftly after the Lord to be of use to Him but the Lord was more alive to save the life of the devotee than to take to the

275. ibid. 7.4: 6.
276. idid. 7.4: 7.
277. ibid. 7.4: 8.
278. ibid. 7.4: 9.
279. ibid. 7.4: 10.
280. ibid. 2.6: 7; 4.2: 1; 6.10: 1 etc.
281. ibid. 3.7: 10.
282. Pōtana, B: *Mahābhāgavatamu*: Ch. 8: 96 to 98.

weapons which He would like to make use of. Some versions of this incident depict the elephant as entering into the tank to fetch the lotuses for worshipping the Lord and as having got then into the clutches of the crocodile.[283] Besides revealing fully that the Lord has unbounded mercy for the suffering humanity, this incident has been mainly instrumental to declare the Lord's greatness, superiority over others and His individuality.

283. ibid. 3.1: 9.

INTER-RELATIONS OF GOD, SELF AND WORLD

The acme of perfection in attributes which is reached only in Nārāyaṇa, the Lord's supremacy and His divine descents are meaningful only when what is other than Him is understood in its true nature. The frequent references which are contained in the compositions of the Āḷvārs to the Lord's having no one as superior or equal to Him prove this. All these which are inseparable from Him have their own individuality, which, however, adds to the meaning of Godhead.

The self is referred to by the terms 'spirit', 'soul' and '*ātman*' in philosophy. When the word '*ātman*' connotes the finite self or the individual soul, it refers to it as distinct from the body (*dehā)*, the sense-organs *(indiriyas)*, mind (*manas*), and the vital breath (*prāṇa*). "By adopting *Sankhyan* psychology Viśiṣṭādvaita defines *ātman* negatively as *puruṣa* different from the twenty-four categories of *prakṛti.* The latter is composed of the five gross elements (*bhūtas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), the five cognitive sense organs, the five conative sense organs, *manas*, *bhuddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and primal *prakrti*. *Puruṣa* is the twenty-fifth category".[1] The nature of the body is referred to by Nammaḷvār as follows -

"Poṅku aimpulaṉum pori aintum
karumēntiriyam aimpūtam
Iṅku ivvuyir ēy pirakiruti
māṉ āṅkāram manaṉkaḷē".[2]

- 'The five conative senses, the five cognitive senses, the five organs of the body, the five elements, *prakṛti* which is

1. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 283.
2. T.V.M. 10.7: 10.

associated with the life-principle, *mahat. ahaṅkāra*, and the will - these constitute the living body'. No doubt the *ātman* has its own separate being, but its ultimate meaning is Brahman and it is therefore indistinguisable from it. So the nature of *ātman* cannot be known from that of *Paramātman* owing to their inseparable relation. The *jīvas* are projected into manifestation by Brahman. Prior to this manifestation the *ātman* is atomic in size, resides in a separate body, lies inactive like a bird whose wings have not yet grown. It is God that awakens it from its torpidity and sets in on a career of activity. It is self-luminous, sentient subject of experience and an agent. Though it is infinitesimal in its monadic existence, its attributive knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*) can be infinite and all pervasive like the light of the sun.[3] The self is infinitely smaller than the hundredth part of a point of a hair which is divided a hundred times. Yet it is infinite in its range [4] The *jīva* is said to be "windowless in the sense that it perseveres in its unique being; but its consciousness is capable of having a cosmic range and can mirror the whole universe"[5].

Nammāḻvār realizes the nature of the *ātman* by the grace of the Lord and describes it in the following verse:

"Niṉṟa oṉṟai uṇarntēṉukku,
atan nuḷ nērmai atu itu eṉṟu
Oṉṟum oruvarkku, uṇaralākātu;
uṇarntu mēlum kāṇparitu;
Ceṉṟu ceṉṟu, paramparam āy,
yātum iṉṟit tēyntu aṟṟu,
Naṉṟu, tītu eṉṟu aṟivu aritāy,
naṉṟāy jñānam kaṭantatē "[6]

- 'The soul is eternal, and is essentially characterized by intelligence (*jñāna*); the soul which the Lord has condescended to exhibit to me as His mode, or related to Him as the *predi-*

3. S.B. 2.3: 26.
4. Sv. Up. 5: 9.
5. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 285.
6. T.V.M. 8.8 : 5.

cate is to the *subject*, or *attribute* is to *substance*; the soul which cannot be classified under any category, as *this* or *that*; the soul, the nature of which is beyond the comprehension of even the enlightened; the soul, whose apperception by the strenuous mental effort called *yoga* (psychic meditation) is even then not comparable to such perception or direct proof as arising from the senses conveying the knowledge of the external world; the soul (as revealed to me by the Lord) transcending all other categories of things, which could be grouped as 'body' or as 'the senses' or as 'the vital spirit' *(prāṇa)*, or as 'the mind' *(manas)*, or as 'the will' *(buddhi)*, because destitute of the modifications and corruptions to which all these are subject, the soul, which is very subtle and distinct from any of these, neither coming under the description 'good', or 'bad". In brief, the soul is an entity which does not fall under the cognizance of sense-knowledge.

A close following of the commentary '*Īṭu*' will throw more light on the subject :

Ni<u>n</u>ṟa o<u>n</u>ṟai.........nērmai : The soul is a unique verity distinct from the body, the external senses, the sensory (*manas*) and the reason (*buddhi*). While these are perishable, the soul alone remains apart as the Imperishable.[7]

7. cf. Kaṭh. Up. 2. 18. The soul is unborn, constant, eternal, permanent and primeval; it is not slain. Again cf. Ch. Up. 8.1 : 5 and Bh. G. 2 : 19, 20.

The Āḻvār, throughout his *Tiruvāymoḻi* up to this, never bestowed any appreciable attention on the nature or the soul, for the reason that all his mind and heart were absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord and His blessed Attributes, Glory etc., before which the soul-nature is like the fire-fly before the Glory of the Effulgent Luminary, the Sun. The saint had no time to give to rational meditation *(gnosis)* to realise soul-nature, to the detriment of emotional devotion *(amor)* to realised God. For, as in the manner of the released soul, not caring to waste a thought over the painful memories surrounding the embodied state, the saint who is transported with the revels of his enjoyment with his Lord, the Spouse, never considers it his worth while to waste his time over a search after the inferior kind of soul-knowledge. However, he sketches a knowledge of this inferior nature, because, as a part and mode and predicate of Himself, God was pleased to bestow this knowledge on him.

atu itu enṟu : The soul cannot be known as *this* or *that*, for all objects of experience are known by the methods of agreement and difference; but no such method is applicable to the *thing* soul.

Oṉṟum oruvarkku uṇaralākātu : Neither by speech nor by any process of thought is it possible to disclose the nature of the soul even to those minds which have made great advance in spiritual knowledge.

uṇarntum.........kāṇparitu : Even if some knowledge concerning it is had, it is only partial knowledge of it, not knowledge of it in its entirety.[8]

Ceṉṟu ceṉṟu.........āy : Beyond and beyond, does soul's nature transcend the several vestures veiling it; - groupable under the general categorical heads as (i) *annamaya* (gross body), (ii) *prana-maya* (subtle or vegetative body), (iii) *manō-maya* (mind-body).[9]

yātum.........aṟṟu : Not partaking of the nature of any of these categories, nor of the imperfections attaching thereto, the soul stands aloof, as of its own distinct, subtle, species.

Naṉṟu titu ......aritāy : When a comparison is instituted between one object and another, or as when one material principle of a group is compared with another of another group, notions such as 'this is *better* than that', or 'that is *worse* than that' arise; but soul being a spiritual principle it is incapable of such comparisons.

naṉṟāy jñānam kaṭantatē : The soul is thus by itself a singular verity, and characterised by its own peculiar attributes of intelligence (*jñāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*) [10]

---

8. cf. Bh. G. 11 : 54. "Arjuna! to know, to see, and enter into, the true nature of spirit, is difficult".
9. Taitt. Up. 2 : 1, 2, 3.
10. cf. Māṇikkavācakar's statement : "Ceṉṟu ceṉṟu aṇuvāyt tēyntu oṉṟan" - "Nearer and nearer to Thee it droweth, wearing away atoms by atom (its non-spiritual accretions), till it is one with Thee' (T.V.K. 394).

The Āḷvārs do not, therefore, treat the nature of the self or the classification of the selves as *nitya*, *mukta*, and *bhaddha*. However, they are aware of the nature of the selves which could be brought under these categories. Those who are eternal and so do not have to undergo any of the sufferings due to bondage have a clear conception of their own essential nature, their relationship to the Lord and their being subordinated to the supreme Person. Therefore, they dedicate themselves to His service consistent with the work allotted to them. These souls live only in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha and accompany the Lord wherever He proceeds. Ādiśeṣa, as the name signifies, is the serpent which is subordinated to Him from the very beginnng. To the Lord who is with Śrī Ādiśeṣa becomes the umbrella when the Lord moves about, the throne for Him to sit on the sandals (*pāduka*) to stand in and while He lies down, he becomes the bed, jewelled lamp with the lustrous gems on his hoods, a towel and a pillow.[11] It is said that he became born as Lakṣmaṇa to serve the Lord who descended down to the earth as Rāma.[12] Garuḍa the vehicle of God, is another self which is generally present in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. He is of the nature of the *Vedas*.[13] He renders service to God, He is a friend, vechicle, seat, flag, canopy, and fan for the Lord.[14] It is because of him that the Lord is possessed of the unique reputation of riding on him and having his figure in the flag.[15] It is said that the flapping of the wings of the Garuḍa while flying produces the chanting sound of the *Sāma-Veda*.[16] Viṣvaksena is another eternal self who is in-charge of the army of Viṣṇu. He enjoys what is cast off by the Lord after enjoyment.[17] These and others who are eternally present in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha are also referred to as *Nityasūris*. Some souls get the name *mukta* (released) after they leave the worldly bondage through God's grace and

---

11. M.Tv. 53; cf. *Śtotraratna*, 40.
12. Pad. P. 6.269 : 94.
13. *Catusśloki*, 1; *Śtotraratna*, 41.
14. *Śtotraratna*, 41.
15. M.Tv, 5, 74; T.V.M. 5.7: 3.
16. T.V.M. 3.8: 5.
17. *Śtotraratna*, 42.

enjoy rendering service to the Lord in Srī Vaikuṇṭha. The bound *jīvas* (*baddhas*) are those who suffer the worldly ills. Due to beginningless *karma*,[18] they have their essential nature (*svarūpa*) concealed with the result that they have individually diverse stands of knowledge, potency, and other attributes. They could not have perfect knowledge of themselves nor can they have a uniform realization of God. They include Brahmā, Rudra, Indra and other denizens of heaven, sages and ordinary men.[19]

The individual soul is stated as being dear to the Lord of Lakṣmī even like the *Kaustubha;* he can be called the prince, the Lord's son, His disciple, His attendent, His dependant existing solely for Him (*śeṣa*) and His servant. It is by His gracious desire that all souls should enjoy His blissful state and attain their goal. The individual self therefore, by his essential nature, entitled to the service of his master as his birth right as the eternals themselves. But sunk in the sleep of beginningless *māya*, he has fallen into the wilderness of matter, has had repeated births in quick succession, has lost the primary aim of existence, has found no comfort or consolation, has lost the splendour of his real nature owing to evil desires and passions and finally attains immortality by realising his true nature and purpose. The condition of the *jīva* in *samsāra* has been aptly described by Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika by the parable of the young prince who in a boyish way strays away from his royal father, enters the huts of wild tribes and identifies himself with them.[20] But a trustworthy friend weans him away from his wicked surroundings by reminding him of his royal destiny and succeeds in reclaiming him. The father who was searching for his lost son is very happy and overjoyed to meet him, and the two are at once reunited in love. Similar is the state of *jīva*, who belongs to Brahman and who identifies himself with the body, loses his real character and assumes a different nature. He sleeps in and as matter in the *pralaya* state and subjects him-

18. Peri. Tm. 4.7: 7; P.Tv. 22; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 1.
19. cf. T.V.M. 4.10: 10.
20. S.B. 2.1: 4 and R.T.S. Ch. 1.

self to the wheel of *samsāra* with all its hazards and hardships till he is made to relax his folly by a loving *guru*. He at last retraces his steps, regains his self knowledge, is freed from the fetters of *karma,* and enters his home in the absolute. The freed self withdraws itself for ever from the twenty-four *tattvas* of *prakṛti* in the same way in which it entered into them and became practically a mode of matter. Being Brahman he becomes Brahman.

The Āḻvārs hold the view that Nārāyaṇa is the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. Nammāḻvār says: "At a time when there was as yet no created world or creature, after Deluge, the Lord as the Originator planted the four-faced Brahmā, the three-eyed Śiva and created the three worlds from His navel";[21] "the first great God who through such measures as creating it, heaving it, devouring it, releasing it by spitting, and striding it, protects the universe in the past, present and future".[22] The same idea is repeated in a number of verses in his important work *Tiruvāymoḻi*.[23] As a protector of the Universe "the Lord reclined on the banyan leaf after drawing into Himself for protection at the time of the Deluge, Śiva with the cool moon on his head, the four-faced Brahmā, Indra, all the creatures and worlds, the elements, the sun and moon and planets all in tact"[24] and "my Lord both created and lodged the universe within Himself (for preserving it)".[25] In his other poem *Periya Tiruvantāti* the Āḻvār refers to God as the creator who brought into being all the various forms of creation on a widespread scale.[26] He is the self-created, best of men; He is unparalleled; He is immanent in all objects; if He relaxes His protective care, the universe will become topsy-tury; and He alone can set in aright. Who can estimate His power?[27] He swallowed the earth; He spat

21. T.V.C. 2; cf. T.V.M. 4.10: 1; 7.4: 9.
22. ibid. 6: cf. T.V.R. 74. cf. T.V.M. 10.5; 3: 10.7: 9.
23. T.V.M. 2.8; 7; 3.1: 10; 4.5: 10; 7.1: 3; 8.1: 5; 8.4: 2; 9.3: 2; 9.9: 2.
24. T.V.C. 7. cf. T.V.M. 3.10: 9.
25. ibid. 2.
26. P.Tv. 18.
27. ibid. 24.

it out; He raised it up; He measured it; He created it and He is immanent in it.[28] "The world, the deluge which comes into existence when the world remains destroyed, the blue sea with the beautiful waves, mountains, the bright fires, wind, *ākāśa*, all these are the products created by the Lord of Śrī with His will".[29] This accords well with the *Upaniṣadic* sense that the Brahman intended to become Itsef many and be born.[30] It is not the world alone that is produced by His will. Music, *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, *Manusmṛti* and other books on *Dharma*, which are all transformations of sound in particular settings are also the products created by His will.[31]

The central principle on which the theory of the origin and development of the universe is based is familiarly known as *satkāryavāda*[32] according to which nothing new comes into being, nor is anything created out of nothing. "As a spider moves along its threads, and as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, even so from this Self come forth all organs, all worlds, all deities and all beings. Its mystic name is the "Truth of truth' (*satyasya satya*)."[33] This idea is expressed by Nammāḻvār as follows: "The Lord of the Eternals created Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and the *ṛṣis*, and the whole sentient and non-sentient beings single-handed by the mere wish".[34] The processes of involution and evolution are spoken of as "Uṇṭu umiḻtal". They refer to the Lord as "Mūvulaku uṇṭu umiḻ tēvapirāṉ";[35] "jñālam muṟṟum uṇṭu umiḻnta nātaṉ"[36] and so on. At a time when there was no world or any living being, He became the inherent cause (*vittu*) for the world.[37] The delightful class of Gods, the sentient beings

28. ibid. 42; Peri. Tm. 5.9: 2; 5.10: 3; 6.1: 1, 4, 5.
29. M.Tv. 61; Nāṉ. Tv. 37; cf. T.V.M 2.2: 5.
30. Taitt Up. 2:6.
31. Nāṉ. Tv. 76.
32. *Saṁkhaykārikā*, 9.
33. Br. Up. 2.1: 20. cf. *Tiruvarankattu Mālai* -18
34. T.V.M. 1.5: 4.
35. ibid. 8.9: 4. cf. ibid. 4.2: 1; 8.10: 4; 9.3: 2; 9.9: 2.
36. Peri. Tm. 4.8: 6. cf. ibid. 4.10: 5; 5.7: 9; 5.9: 2; 5.10:
37. T.V.C. 4; T.V.M. 1.5: 4.

belonging to the mortal group and the inert matter and the lustrous luminaries like sun and moon blossom forth in Him, that is, were in the dormant stage till they got manifested by Him from Him.[38] He is both the father and mother, thus being the inherent cause of everything, existing permanently in all the three times, present, past and future.

There are a number of verses in *Tiruvāymoḷi* referring to the involutionary and evolutionary processes of the Universe wrought by the Lord. The Āḻvār says: "Thou swallowedest the seven worlds and the bronght them out";[39] "He gobbled up the seven worlds (for protection)";[40] "My Lord gulped the three worlds together and repaired to the banyan leaf".[41] In the form of a child He devoured all the worlds and went to sleep on the banyan leaf";[42] "His bed is the (small) banyan leaf. But His stomach could hold within itself all the seven worlds";[43] "Who else can protect except the Lord Who created by His will the celestials, the three worlds, and all the objects, and lodged these within Himself for the safe keeping?"[44]; "the Lord Whose function is to protect at the time of the Deluge drew into Himself all objects and in His navel produced Brahmā, Indra, the celestials and their worlds";[45] "the Lord is the Brahmā who, created by Him and settled on His navel, creates. The Lord is the Rudra who destroys".[46] The creative function of the Lord is referred to in a number of verses.[47] In one verse the Āḻvār says: "Thou createst the four-faced Brahmā within Thyself commanding him to create all the worlds";[48] in another "Thou art the single, self-

38. T.V.M 2.9: 6.
39. T.V.M. 1.5 : 8. cf. T.V.R. 65.
40. ibid. 1.8 : 7; 1.10 : 5. cf. T.V.R. 20, 56. 79, 91; T.V.M. 7.3 : 9.
41. ibid. 1.9 : 4; 6.2 : 4.
42. ibid. 4.2 : 1; 2.6 : 7; 5.7 : 7; 7.1 : 4.
43. ibid. 2.2 : 7.
44. ibid. 2.2 : 8.
45. ibid. 2.2 : 9; 7.2 : 2.
46. ibid. 2.8 : 3; 3.6 : 1; 7.5 : 4.
47. ibid. 7.1 : 9; 7.6 : 1; 7.8 : 8.
48. ibid. 3.1 : 7; 5.10 : 8.

created great God who created Brahmā, who, in his turn, created the three worlds and all life";[49] and further he addresses Him "O cloud-hued Lord, Thou createst the world surrounded by the sea".[50] Regarding the preserving function he says: "Thou preservest the world in the present, the past and the future";[51] and again "Thou with the resplendent discus, protectest the seas and the world".[52] In some verses the Āḻvār speaks of both the functions – evolution and involution.[53] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār devotes one whole hymn to a celebration of the solicitude of the Lord in protecting at the time of Deluge and creating all the worlds, the gods and the celestials by swallowing and then releasing by spitting them out.[54]

The created products continue to exist every moment through His will It is the Lord's will that shapes the world out of Himself and it is the same that makes it endure as long as He desires. Thus it is preserved and protected by Him.[55] The Lord gives to the *jīvas* the ways and means of leading a healthy and good way of life. The selves, however, put these means to bad use and add to their suffering. In order that such sufferings, which grow boundless, are put an end to, the Lord destroys the world through His will. His will thus belongs to Him and is mysterious.[56] It must, however, be borne in mind that the Lord does not merely allow the world that He has created to continue to exist but protects it from sufferings which befalls the *jīvas* now and then. He protected the kine by lifting up the Govardhana, the *Vedas* and the systems of thought which He had promulgated whenever there were fears for their disappearance, Brahmā and Rudra when they faced difficulties and the entire world during Deluge.

49. ibid. 8.10 : 7.
50. ibid. 3.2 : 1; 6.8 : 2.
51. ibid. 3.1 : 5. cf. ibid. 6.9 : 3; 7.4 : 4.
52. ibid. 7.1 : 2. cf. ibid. 8.4 : 11; 9.1 : 1; 10.1 : 3; 10.8 : 2.
53. ibid. 8.4 : 8; 8.9 : 4; 8.10 : 4; 10.7 : 9.
54. Peri. Tm. 11.6.
55. Nān. Tv. 32.
56. Tc. V. 41.

Protection for all these on the occasions as those mentioned above did not come forth from any one but Him.[57] His interest in preserving the integrity of the world is evidenced in Himself being the aeon, the head of the sacred rites and the *antaryāmin* of the sun who has a one-wheeled chariot. He gave protection to the lordly elephant, sent forth arrows at Lanka and destroyed it and helped Arjuna by screening the sun with His discus.[58] He is rightly called Ātippiraṉ, the Primal Protector, as He created all the gods, worlds and beings and has been protecting them.[59]

The noumenal self or *ātman* as *puruṣa* is free and eternal, but somehow "it gets phenomenalised, becomes bound to *prakṛti* and is caught up in the causal necessity of *karma*."[60] Each act of *karma* leaves behind an impression or mark on the mind. The successive actions of similar type deepen the impressions which assume the form of inherent inclination or predilection. The moral experiences of the good and bad deeds are ultimately traceable to the responsibility of the empirical self. If the *ātman* falsely identifies itself with *prakṛti* and its *guṇas*, it becomes a sensitive self or the product of nature; it is phenomenalised and subjects itself to the external determinations of sense inclinations and becomes a slave of desire. But if it exercises its moral freedom, it realises its noumenal nature as a spiritual being and attains self-mastery and autonomy. The self can become a a dog or a god with its immense potentialities, and no being on earth or beyond can destroy its consciousness. As the sower of the seeds alone is answerable for the harvest, man harvests the type of fruits according as the type of the seeds he sows.

The central idea of the doctrine of *karma* can be clarified with the help of an analogy. A shop keeper or a business man by his earning and spending in a year must leave a

57. M.Tv. 87.
58. Peri. Tm. 5.7 : 8.
59. T.V.M. 4.10 : 1.
60. *The Philosophy of Visiṣṭādvaita*, p. 311.

balance in his fund by each item of income and expenditure and the resultant interactions. And by the end of the year the residue or balance of that year becomes the capital of the next year because the capital is of great importance here. Thus, what is carried over in the present year is brought forward in the next year. With the coming of the new year (birth) the capital which is the residue of the last year cannot remain as before or static owing to the necessity of constant business transactions; earning and spending would instantaneously force the capital to fluctuate sedulously. Similarly death is the last act of one's birth; hence the balance or residue with which one dies becomes the birth-making *karma* in the next birth. This capital of *karma*, called *Prārabdha*,[61] by the inevitable process of action and reaction of the present birth begins to fluctuate in perfect conformity with the merits and demerits of those actions. *Prārabdha*, in this way, changes and is perpetuated with new and fresh actions and successive changes beget successive new phases of it. This play of actions goes on until man rests in death or annihilates the subsequent birth-making residue of karma by spiritual knowledge by attaining liberation when the momentum of *Prārabdha* has exhausted itself in the course of life. All *jīvas*, from the butterfly to the Brahman, are alike conditioned by the law of *karma*. *Karma* causes rebirth and rebirth adds to the propensity of the evil, and this vicious circle throws the souls into the maelstrom of misery.

The Āḷvār saints refer to *karma* by various terms as "Tol-vinai",[62] "Aruvinai",[63] "Paḷavinai",[64] "Val-vinai"[65]

61. There are three kinds of *karma*: *Sañcita*, *Prārabdha* and *Āgāmi*. *Sañcita* is all the accumulated *karma* of the past. Part of it is seen in the character of the individual, his tendencies and aptitudes, inclinations and desires etc. *Prārabdha* is that portion of the past *karma* which is responsible for the present body. Āgāmi is the coming *karma* which includes also the *karma* that is being gathered at present.

62. T.V.M. 4.4 : 11.

63. T.V.R. 37, 66; P.Tv. 7; T.V.M. 3.5 : 11.

64. Peri. Tm. 2.7 : 10; 5.7 : 10; T.V.M. 10.6 : 2.

65. T.V.R. 10, 59; Peri. Tm. 4.7 : 7; P.Tv. 26; ibid. 22, 69.

"Val-viṉaiyar",[66] "Koṭu-vinaikal",[67] "Vinai val iruḷ",[68] "Tuyar",[69] "Vem-tuyar",[70] "Piṟavit-tuyar",[71] "Vaṉ tuyar",[72] "Peruntuyar itumpai",[73] "Tukkam",[74] "Tukka cīlam",[75] "Tuṉpam",[76] "Tuṉpakkaṭal"[77] "Iṭar",[78] "Iṭark katal",[79] "Iṭar cuḻi",[80] "Caṉmam",[81] "Nōykaḷ" "Nōy",[82] "Allal"[83] and "Pāvam"[84] perhaps in the sense of sins. They refer to merits and demerits as "Nalviṉai and Tīviṉai"[85] and sometimes "Iruvalviṉaikaḷ".[86] They consider birth itself as a great sorrow-'piravi-tuyar"; "piṟappu ām pollā aruviṉai".[87] They want to be rid of this birth - "ākkai nōy aṟuttu";[88] "iṟappōṭum piṟappu aṟukkum".[89] Merits and demerits are, according to them, chains that fetter the self, though the

---

66. P.Tv. 69.
67. Peri. Tm. 5.10 : 10.
68. T.V.M. 10.5 : 10.
69. ibid. 3.10 : 5; 4.1 : 11; Peri. Tm. 5.1 : 10; 8.7: 10; 11.3: 10; Periyāḷ Tm. 3.7: 11.
70. Peri. Tm. 5.7: 9.
71. T.V.M. 10.4: 3.
72. P.Tv 54.
73. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 1.
74. ibid. 10.8 : 10; T.V.M. 3.10: 8.
75. T.V.M. 4.6 : 11
76. ibid. 3.10: 6; Perum. Tm. 6 : 10.
77. Nāc. Tm. 13.10.
78. T.V.M. 3.10: 4; Peri. Tm. 4.7: 1, 2, 3, 6; 10.6: 10; 10.7: 10; Periyal. Tm. 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 3.2: 10.
79. Tc. V. 115.
80. ibid. 98.
81. T.V.M. 3.7: 11; 3.9: 11.
82. ibid. 2.6: 7; 1.7: 11.
83. ibid. 3.10: 7; 10.8: 10.
84. Peri. Tm. 5.2: 10; 5.8: 10; 6.10: 10; 7.5: 10: 7.9: 10; 8.8: 10; 9.6: 10; 9.9: 10; Nac. Tm. 4:11.
85. T.V.R. 89; I Tv. 67; Nāṉ. Tv. 57.
86. T.V.M. 1.5: 10.
87. T.V.R. 100.
88. Tc. V. 97.
89. ibid. 46; cf. T.V.M. 3.1: 11; 10.4: 6; 10.6: 10; 10.8: 3.

former is of gold and the latter is that of iron. Good and evil are therefore relative as they are linked by causal necessity. They subject the self to the adventures of numberless births and deaths and so the self is caught up in the see-saw of *samsāra*.

It is, therefore, clear from the above, that every man reaps what he sows. No doubt God is good, and therefore the existence of evil and other imperfections has to be traced to the freedom of the finite self. Moral freedom is a real choice between different possible courses of action, and the *jīva* is responsible for the choice of evil; and God is responsible not for the choice between good and evil, but for the pleasures and pains that follow the deed. The existence of evil in the divine plan is only a bare possibility, but it is the self that makes the possible actual and enjoys the fruits of *karma*. Pleasure and pain are determined by the nature of *karma*, and they vary with different persons at different times. Nothing, *cit* or *acit*, is intrinsically good or bad, pleasant or painful and the hedonistic value of a thing is relative to the moral differences caused by karma.[90]

It may be asked why Īśvara, Who is the well-wisher of all living-beings, allows the *jīva* to suffer, and why does He not grant cessation of these sufferings. Īśvara is always inclined to bestow His grace. He is eager to confer *mokṣa* on those who seek His protection. But owing to man's desire, the Lord agrees to keep Him here in this world for sometime longer. He avails Himself of those *karmas* which have begun to yield their fruit *(prārabdha)* and which are the cause of these sufferings and punishes these men of hard hearts in order to correct them as a father and the like would do in the case of such as their sons with a whip at hand. It is therefore proper to consider such punishments as special favours, a sort of blessings in disguise. According to Paṭṭar even a disease could be a teacher for us, as it would create a repentance in our mind. Kūrat-tāḻvāṉ the disciple of Rāmānuja on losing his eye-sight did not long for his eyes again, as they would

90. S.B. 3.2: 12.

make him look at the object of sense-pleasures.[91]

The sufferings are therefore intended only to reveal, to some, their offences with their consequences and then conceal them in order to create utter disgust, disgust like that of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār who says: "My mind cannot bear the thought of living in a house in the roof of which there is a serpent"[92] so that thereby they too, might long for the release from *samsāra* which Īśvara has already made up His mind to confer on them. So emancipation is a combined process of *gracia operans* and *gratia co-operans*. In such contexts, the aspect of the experience of sorrow or pain is the fruit of evil deeds in the past. Among these, some punishments are the fruit of certain good deeds in the past which have begun to operate *(prārabdha)*. When the crow (kākāsura) fell at Śrī Rāma's feet praying for life, the Lord gave him his life; the fruit of His *prapatti* was full and complete. Even the punishment inflicted on this wicked crow whereby he lost the sight of one eye was not really of the nature of punishment. It was, as it were, a special form of favour, because it would prevent him from doing evil again.[93]

The self thus requires opportunities to bear the consequences of its doings. It requires for this purpose a medium in the form of a physical frame. The residues of the deeds, though they are present with him, could not by themselves determine the nature of the body that is required for exhausting them, nor can the soul do it, for if it can, it could have had easy control over its own residues. In its helpless state, the Lord determines the nature of the physical body in accordance with those residues in order that the experience of them through that particular body would enable to exhaust them. In the self-multiplication and creation of the world, this is the main motive of the Lord which also explains why certain selves are made to obtain their coming into being in particular

91. Somewhat as Milton reconciled himself to his blindness.

92. Peri. Tm. 11. 8: 3.

93. Periyāḷvār refers to this incident. Vide Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.10:6.

places and to possess certain specific bodies. Merits and demerits of the selves thus are the accessories for God in creating the world.[94]

Īśvara is called the inner self or soul *(śarīri)*, because as long as they exist, He is, in regard to sentient and non-sentient substances, their support *(ādhāra)*, their controller or ruler *(niyanta)* and their Lord or Master *(śeṣi)* for whose purposes they exist. Sentient beings and non-sentient things form His body, since, with regard to Him, they stand as substances supported by Him, controlled by Him, and existing solely for the fulfilment of His purposes, throughout their existence. Īśvara is therefore called the Supporter and the Controller or Ruler of all sentient beings and non-sentient things, because from His essential nature *(svarūpa)* and His will *(saṅkalpa)*, they derive their existence, continuance and activities. Just as Īśvara is the abode, or support *(ādhāra)* of the attributes which define His essential nature (viz., *satyam, jñānam, ānandam* and the like) and the other qualities possessed by Him with His essential nature so defined (qualities like compassion and accessibility), He is also the inseparable and direct support of all substances, sentient and non-sentient, other than Himself. He is also the support, through these substances (i.e., indirectly) of the qualities that pertain to them.

Īśvara's support is, according to *Śāstras*, by His essential nature and by His will. "The Heavens, the sky with the moon, the sun and the stars, the different quarters, the earth, the great ocean - all these are supported by the might of the Supreme Being, Vāsudeva".[95] The human body exists from the time of the entry of the soul into it and perishes or disintegrates when the soul leaves it. It is therefore known to be supported by the essential nature of the soul. In the state of dreamless sleep and the like, when the will of the soul is dormant, the body continues to exist without any

---

94. *Vedānta-sāra* 2.1: 34; Br. Up. 4.4: 5.
95. M.Bh. Anusāsa 254: 136.

deterioration; so its existence then is clearly dependent on the essential nature of soul and not its will. In the waking state, when the body is kept from falling, it is sustained by the will of the soul. When the existence of the body is dependent only on the essential nature of the soul it is supported (*ādheyatva*) by the latter; and when the existence depends on the will, it is controlled and directed (*niyamyatva*) by the latter.

This truth of Brahman or Īśvara as the *śarīrin* of all beings is clearly intuited by Nammāḷvār. He says:

"Tiṭavicumpu erivaḷi nīrnilam ivaimicaip
Paṭarporuḷ muḷuvatum āyavai avaitoṛum
Uṭalmicai uyireṉak karantueṅkum parantuḷaṉ;
Cuṭarmiku curutiyuḷ ivaiuṇṭa curaṉē."[96]

– 'My Lord is one who in-forms all the objects and creatures that appear on the earth, on water, in the atmosphere, in fire and in the firm expanse of space, and at once interpenerates and transcends all these objects, internally and externally, much like the soul in-forming the body', and again "He extends in a hidden form into every minute object in every minute region on the earth and in the worlds above just as the universe extends spaciously through the atoms of water which go to make the ocean".[97] These ideas are expressed together in another verse, of course, in a slightly different form with an explanatory simile. "My Lord, Thou hast for Thy body the five elements and all the objects which emerge from these. As butter in fresh-drawn milk, Thou art present unseen in all those objects.[98]" A similar conception of God is found in a verse of Caṅkam poetry: "The flawless Lord with the discus, celebrated as the foremost of the *Vedas*, has the vast earth for His feet, the encircling, pristine ocean for His garment, the expanse of space as His body, the directions for His hands, the moon with cool rays and the blazing sun as His

---

96. T.V.M. 1.1: 7.
97. ibid. 1.1: 10.
98. ibid. 8.5: 10; cf. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 9.

eyes, with all these as part of Himself."[99] One comes across many verses in the whole of his works and in the works of other Āḻvārs the same sentiment being expressed in different ways. For example, "The Lord is in the form of the ever moving wind, the extensive space, the *terra firma*, the boundless ocean, the blazing fire, the sun and moon, the *Devas*, men and all sentient and non-sentient creation;"[100] "The Lord stands such that all the five elements and the whole of creation are Himself";[101] "The Lord is like the very life of life......He is the life principle of all the worlds."[102] Again Nammāḻvār says: "The Lord extends at all times and in all places effortlessly; He has the Prime form of *jñana;* and He is at the same time so formless that He cannot be got at through the senses";[103] "Thou art all the three fair worlds; Thou art the three-eyed Lord and the great Brahmā; Thou art the gods like Indra who has the terrible weapon of *Vajrāyudha* in his hand";[104] "Nārāyaṇa Who Himself is all sentient creatures and non-sentient things, and the *Devas* like Brahmā who having attained to the highest reaches in the path of *Dharma* have secured the state of *śānthi*"."[105] Pēyāḻvār says: "The Lord is a nonpareil who has for His body all objects, persons like Brahmā and others who have attained to a meritorious state through penance, the constellations, the blazing fire, the great mountains, the eight directions and the sun and moon."[106] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār, in one of his verses, expresses the same sentiment: "The foremost of gods, Śriman Nārāvaṇa, has for His body all living beings and all non-sentient objects, the inner meaning of the *Vedas* and the Trinity in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva".[107] That the Lord is the Ruler can be seen from

99. NRR. invocatory verse.
100. T.V.M. 3.6: 5.
101. ibid. 7.6: 2.
102. ibid. 8.1: 5.
103. ibid. 3.10: 10.
104. ibid. 7.6: 4.
105. ibid. 1.3: 3.
106. Mū. Tv. 38.
107. Peri. Tm. 4.1: 2.

the following: "Thou art my ruler! all the worlds, all the gods worshipped in these worlds for fruit, all the rites of worship offered to these gods, all the objects that might be beyond these worlds, the agent and the unknown doer, the creatures which are beyond the grasp of the senses - all these have been ordained by Thee".[108] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār expresses the same sentiment thus: "The Lord is Trinity in unity performing the functions of creation, preservation and and destruction when viewed from the *śarīra-śarīri bhāva* point of view, but is, actually, of a particular different shape."[109] Just as the body and soul of a person are spoken of together as one entity, Brahamā, Śiva and other gods are identified with Viṣṇu though Viṣṇu has, at the same time, a distinct shape of His own. In other words, the other gods are like the body and Visnu like the soul. Again Nammāḻvār brings out the idea rather more clearly: "He once lodged in His stomach all the seven worlds, earth and heaven, all the men and gods, animals and vegetation and the five elements, manifested Himself in the form of the universal creative will, established Himself in the region of eternal glory and acquired as His body the Trinity who take charge of creation, preservation and destruction"[110] and again, "When wilt Thou draw me to Thy unattainable Feet, having placed me in the castle of Brahmāṇḍa (the microcosm) which is but the arrangement of the five elements that were manifested by Thee at the time of creation, withdrawn at the time of involution and later again brought out".[111] In this connection the illuminating remark of Piḷḷai Tirunaṟaiyūr-Araiyar is worth noting: "It is impossible for any one to unravel the involutions of a sparrow's nest. When therefore the Almighty has woven a net about our soul, in due regard to the acts of every one of us, how can powerless man disentangle this net? Only He can do it when we clasp His holy feet".[112] In this way every thought, word and deed refer ultimately to the

108. T.V.M. 8.1: 6.
109. Peri. Tm. 2.5: 3.
110. TVM 3.6: 1:
111. ibid. 4.9: 8.
112. Bhag. Vis. Book IV. 4.9: 8 (Commentary).

śarīrin who is the life of our life, the light of the universe and the love of our love. The *śarīrin* is the source and sustenance of all thinking beings and non-thinking objects, which therefore exist as and for His satisfaction.

Īśvara is said to be the śeṣin of all things, because they exist solely for the fulfilment of His purposes. They are His *śeṣas*.[113] The relationship may be paraphrased as the owner-owned relationship. In using the sentient beings and non-sentient things for His own purposes, God's glory is manifested. This is being *śeṣi*. "*Acit* or *cit* is not a being-in-itself, but a being-for-another. Matter exists as a medium for self-realisation, and self-realisation is not for self-satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of the inner Self".[114] The Infinite enters into the finite and evolves into the names and forms of the finite and resides in them as their eternal inner Ruler. The divine purpose consists in the deification of the self by the universal Self entering into it and infinitising it. The self or soul derives its substantiality from the *ādheya* aspect and its function from the *niyanta* aspect, and exists for the satisfaction of the *śeṣi* and all these depend absolutely on His will.

This concept of *śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva* or the owner-owned relationship is well intuited by the Tamil seers of Vaiṣṇavism. Nammāḻvār says: "Taṉṉuḷ aṉaittulakum niṟka, neṟimaiyāl tāṉum avaṟṟuḷ niṟkum pirāṉ"[115] – 'The Lord with all the worlds infolded within Him, infolds Himself in them' and again "Having entered my heart through His affection, He pierced me in two, became life of my life, and drew it into Himself".[116] In another context he says: "I am Thou, the hell of samsāra is ordained by Thee. If that is so, enjoyment

113. A *sūtra* (3.1 : 2) in *Pūrva Mīmāṁsa* says: "That is called a śeṣa which serves the purpose of another (and that other is called a *śeṣi*). e.g. In a sacrifice, the grains of rice are *śeṣa* to the sacrifice which is *śeṣi* because they serve the purpose of the sacrifice".

114 *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 182.

115. T.V.M. 9.6 : 4.

116. ibid. 9.6 : 3.

in Heaven and suffering in Hell are the same. With this knowledge, I face without fear the ills of *samsāra*. Yet, I pray that I may be drawn into Thy feet".[117] Pūtattāḷvār says : "Even if a person is incapable of being aware of his *śeṣatva*, if only room is made available for the Lord in his heart, He enters it of His own accord, just as, even if men are incapable of bringing rain, they provide tanks for rain water to get stored in",[118] and again "We worship Śrīman Nārāyaṇa the supreme Lord on Whose chest constantly lives Lakṣmī and His feet and we hear His holy names being uttered in all the four directions, because of the relation of *śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva* between Him and us".[119] The word '*urimaiyāl*' (by our right) in the verse brings out the full significance of its meaning. The Lord stands in the relation of a *śeṣi* to both sentient beings and non-sentient things in common. In relation to non-sentient things He is *śeṣi*, because they exist for His purposes. In relation to sentient beings or *jīvas* endowed with intelligence, He is *śeṣi* in the special sense of being *svāmi* or Master whom it is their duty to serve. In being *śeṣa* to the Lord the selves share in common with non-sentient things but are *śeṣas* in the special sense also of being His servants.

It may be asked what this sentient being does gain by being supported and controlled by Him and by existing solely for His master. The answer is that by having the Lord as his *ādhara*, the *jīva* becomes an inseparable attribute of the Lord even like His own attributes, *jñāna* and *śakti*. By being the Lord's *śeṣa* and by having the Lord as his *śeṣi*, the *jīva* acquires a taste for an ultimate goal which is appropriate to his essential nature, for every being aims at a goal suited to the conception held by it about its nature. By being the *śeṣa* of the Lord and by having Him as his controller and ruler, he comes to know the specific means or *upāya* (viz., Bhagavān) of attaining the goal or ultimate aim suited to his essential nature. This *upāya* or means is the Lord Himself Who is the only proper means for the attainment of this end who and does

117. ibid. 8.1 : 9.
118. I.Tv. 16.
119. ibid. 57.

not require any auxiliary aid for helping Him. It follows therefore that this sentient being has no other support, exists for nobody else, and has no ther protector than the Lord. This relationship of *śeṣa-śeṣi* between the self and the Lord is disclosed in the first syllable of the eight-lettered *mantra* viz., '*Om*'.

This hypostatic relation of the soul to God is clearly brought out in the line "aṭiyēn̲ uḷḷān̲ uṭal uḷḷān̲"[120] - 'He inheres in the soul and He inhers in the body'. An anecdote has been recorded in the commentaries in respect of the explanation of this concept.[121] Once, when Rāmānuja was holding his holy court of religious discussions, there arose among the audience the question whether the soul is proof of *jñāna* (intelligence) and *ānanda* (bliss) or *śeṣatva* (leigeship). Though Rāmānuja was perfectly informed in the matter, he wished to see the truth expounded by his *guru*, Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr Nampi. He sent his disciple Kūrattāḻvān̲ to Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr to learn from Nampi the truth. After six months of waiting upon the great *Ācārya*, Āḻvān̲ was not able to know the truth as the *Ācārya* condescended not to reveal the secret truths. Āḻvān̲ thereon asked his permission to return to Rāmānuja when the *Ācārya* condescended and put across the answer in a cryptic sentence in which he quoted Nammāḻvār's phrase "In me the vassal". Later Āḻvān explained the meaning thus: "When the Āḻvār uses '*aṭiyēn̲*' elsewhere he means the body to be at the fore in the body-soul. For example, in 'aṭiyēn̲ ceyyum viṇṇappam'[122] the word '*aṭiyēn̲*' does not signify soul since the soul without body cannot make an appeal to the Lord. Similarly in '*aṭiyēn̲ ciṟiya jñānattan̲*'[123] the word '*aṭiyēn̲*' does not stand for soul. The participation of the body is inevitable in the context for the phrase that follows the above is '*kāṇpān̲ alaṟṟuvan*'. So also in the verse preceding the one under discussion.[124] But the verse

120. T.V.M. 8 8: 2.
121. *Iṭṭin̲ Tamiḻākkam*. Vol. VIII. 8.8: 2 (Commentary).
122. T.V.R. 1.
123. T.V.M. 1 5: 7.
124. ibid. 8.8: 1.

under discussion for the reason that '*uṭaluḷḷān*' meaning that 'He inheres in the body' follows '*aṭiyēn uḷḷān*', *aṭiyen uḷḷān* specifically emphasises the soul, bringing out that the Lord inheres in the soul as well as in the body. But the nature of soul is described to be that which is intelligent (*jñāna*) and blissful (*ānanda*). But these attributes are of little account. What characterizes the soul is its relation of liegeship (as creature) to God the Lord (as creator) = (*Śeṣatva*)". The *śeṣatva* of the soul is thus established.

Nārāyaṇa pervades the entire universe with His will.[125] All the same, the universe is very small for Him, that is, it occupies only a small portion of Him. The eight quarters were occupied by the shoulders of the Lord when He measured the universe. The limbs of the world would grow still further but there was no space to occupy. The world is thus small for His pervasion.[126] He is Himself grace and punishment; the states of final release and bondage are the resultants of His will and are therefore not different from Him.[127] The air, fire, water, *ākāśa* and earth out of which arise the five sense-organs are not also distinct from Him. The blue mountains, the blue sea and the submarine fire[128] raging there are also Himself. All these are pervaded by His will This shows that God is All, but this is not pantheism, as the "univese has its being in God, but is not God, and does not exhaust His infinity".[129] The concept of *śārīra-śarīrī bhāva* leads to the unitary nature of reality. Nothing could then exist apart from the Lord and God exists wherever anything is found or felt to exist. This is not to deny individual existence of anything. The fire rages, the water flows and the wind blows but they are conceived to do this under the control of God.

---

125. ibid. 4.5: 9, 10; cf. ibid., 3.6: 5.
126. Mū. Tv. 43, 90.
127. MBh. Śānti. 196: 4.
128. This refers to the anger of Sage Aurva which took the shape of fire raging in the sea. cf. Tc. V. 94; Peri. Tm. 5.7: 9; 9.4: 9; T.V.M. 1.1: 4; 1.5: 4; 6.9: 1.
129. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 77.

Indra, Brahmā, Rudra and other gods and countless selves have in Him a father and a mother. He is unto others a son, kinsman and relative. He is the medicine to cut at the root of worldly bondage. He is the real Nature, and He is the End and the Principle of Life.[130] He is Himself all sentient and non-sentient beings, which means that He is the Self of them.[131] He is the sun and moon, and every thing.[132] Doubt and correct decision, untruth and truth and all other objects are Himself.[133] He is sin and virtue, *mokṣa*, bliss, misery, anger and favour and all qualities.[134]

The Lord is also considered as having endless glories or possessions *(vibhūtis)*. Passages like the following describe His *vibhūtis* : "These are the *vibhūtis* (glories) of Viṣṇu (i e.) Brahmā, Manu and others, time and all beings".[135] "He has, for His abode, the region of eternal glory called *Mahā-vibhūti*".[136] "There is no end, O mighty warrior, to my divine glories".[137] These ideas are expressed concisely by Āḷavantār : "The *aṇḍa* or the Universe and whatever else is found within that *aṇḍa* are His *vibhūtis*."[138] These *vibhūtis* of God are of two kinds, sentient and non-sentient, and these again are of two kinds, some existing for His *līlā* or sport and others for His enjoyment *(bhōga)*. This division into things for play and things for enjoyment is based on the difference in the *rasa* or delectation, though all of them have agreeableness (or *anukūlya)* in common. Bhagavāṉ is considered as being engaged in the work of the universe merely for His play or sport, for it has been said : "From whom is the origin etc.,

---

130. Peri. Tm. 5.7: 2.
131. ibid 4.1: 2.
132. ibid. 4.5: 7.
133. ibid. 4.5: 8.
134. ibid. 4.5: 9.
135. V.P. 1.22: 32.
136. ibid. 5.1: 50.
137. Bh. G. 10: 40.
138. *Āḷavantār Śtotram.* 17.

of the world".[139] "All this is Hari's play or sport".[140] "Of Him who plays like a child".[141] "Playing like a boy with His toys".[142] "Thou playest with Thy creatures, as if they were balls for sport".[143] "All this is merely for play (on the part of the Brahman) as in the world (kings play with the balls)."[144] Nammāḷvār says: "The Lord constitutes action of both of pleasure and pain, the various worlds, the blissful heaven as well as the pleasurless hell, and the various living beings through His great and manifold play;[145] "My Lord, Kaṇṇaṉ, at once creates and identifies Himself with the near, the distant and the medial objects and persons, with all objects and all persons and He is the sole, great Originator who preserves them";[146] "the effulgent Lord of the great flood of knowledge holds within Himself, without huddling them, all objects and all persons";[147] "the sole God took birth in a unique way as mankind, other forms of life and all life";[148] "the dark-complexioned Lord created and became the moving air, the extending space, the solid earth, the vast ocean, the burning fire, the sun and moon, the celestials, and all beings".[149] The Lord not only brings into being, but pervades into the five elements, the stars and planets, all forms of life of all the worlds, human and celestial.[150] It is said that the *līlā vibhūti*, the world of splendour which exists for the sport of the Lord, is the play of the eternal in the temporal and the *nitya vibhūti* or eternal splendour of *Paramapada* is time as eternity. The Lord is the eternal link of love between the two realms and soul-making, as it were, is the goal of cosmic *līlā*.

---

139. V.S. 1.1 : 2.
140. MBh. Śānti. 206 : 58.
141. V.P. 1.2 : 18.
142. MBh. Śānti. 40 : 78.
143. ibid. Sabhā 40 : 78.
144. V.S. 2.1 : 33.
145. T.V.M. 3.10 : 7.
146. ibid. 1.9 : 1.
147. ibid. 2.2: 6.
148. ibid. 3.5: 6.
149. ibid. 3.6: 5.
150. ibid. 7.8.

Śrī Vaikuṇṭha represents the eternal glory (*nitya vibhūti*) of the Lord. It is a place of pure *sattva* not having any tinge of *rajas* and *tamas*. The place, the halls, and the structures, the bodies of God, of the selves who inhabit there eternally and of those who reach it after getting freed from worldly bondage are eternal and are of the nature of this pure *sattva*. There are passages in the traditional texts which speak of this glory. "I know this Great Person of sun-like lustre, who is altogether beyond darkness".[151] Here the word 'darkness' (*tamas*) is to be taken to mean the world of *prakṛti*. "The wise always sees the Highest Place of Viṣṇu".[152] "He is in the Imperishable Region (sky)".[153] "Him Who dwells in the place which is beyond *rajas*".[154] "The All-pervading ancient one who is beyond matter"[155] "The celestial heavenly chariots moving unrestrained, halls, the grove of various kinds and the lotus-pools of crystal-water. All these, O dear, are halls when compared with that abode of the Highest Self".[156] It is a self-luminous place of beauty Yonder, where nature shines for ever as spaceless Space without the passing shadows of evolutionary modifications of *prakṛti* and the contracting influence of its three strands. It is also a place where time is infinite and beyond the plane of space-time. No analogy drawn from human experience can adequately bring out the real nature of this wonderful region.

151. Taitt. Ar. 3.13: 1.
152. Taitt. S. 1.3: 6.
153. ibid. 2.3: 1.
154. ibid. 2.2. 12: 5.
155. ibid. 2.1: 1.
155. M.Bh. Śānti. 1964: 4.

THE ECSTASY OF THE ĀḶVĀR'S GOD-EXPERIENCE

The transcendental nature of God is shown in the epics, *Purāṇas* and other ancient texts to be difficult for human comprehension. In His infinite mercy for the suffering humanity, God presents Himself to the world in the fivefold finitised forms. The selves which are under the spell of *karma* desire earnestly to get relieved from the effects of *karma*, but are not in a position to find out the proper means for it. Traditionally, knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*) is enjoined as the course open for man to achieve this and, but not all the *jīvas* could have the capacity for it. Adoption of the path of *karma* (deed) is also prescribed, but it is found in practice to lead not always to the desired end. Vaiṣṇavism has achieved distinction by restricting the scope of *jñāna* to realizing the real nature of the Supreme Person. Nārāyaṇa whose divine form is blue in complexion like the water-laden cloud and who protects the several worlds is the deity that could help the *jīvas* in distress.[1] Having created the world and reclaimed it from the waters, He had devoured it, let it out and measured it. He is not different from others who do, under His guidance, the works of creation and destruction. This knowledge of reality is to be acquired,[2] by the self in order to have faith in Him for obtaining relief from the worldly ills. People have to take to the footsteps of the seers who had realized Nārāyaṇa as the purport of the *Vedas* and other texts and as the remedy which could destory the diseases. Those seers acquired this knowledge by worshipping Him.[3] It will be futile if one seeks to find out whether the Supreme Person would be like this or that or any

1. T.V.M. 9.3: 1.
2. ibid. 9.3: 2.
3. ibid. 9.3: 3.

other deity or beyond our reach, thus to realize His real status. Such an enquiry need not be conducted, as it would entail much wastage of time and energy. Nārāyaṇa is only Kṛṣṇa. The realization of this would lead to knowing that He is Himself any other deity.[4]

When utter disappointment was faced by the *Upaniṣads*[5] in discerning His nature, it is foolish on the part of the selves to search for Him and try to obtain correct knowledge about Him. Brahmā who is sprung form the navel of Viṣṇu, could not have the perfect vision of His feet. This is proof to make clear that He is beyond comprehension.[6] The great seers declare that He is the only God, but no one can know Him correctly. By adopting the various courses such as *jñāna* and *karma*, the result could not be obtained. Lord's grace alone could yield the intended result.[7]

There were many occasions when the Lord came down to the mortal world for helping those who had faith in Him and who looked upon His favour in times of dire distress,[8] for destroying those who tried to violate His rules and make the innocent souls suffer, and proclaiming the way of good conduct. The divine descents which He took for achieving this end had provided the selves with occasions for their experience of His qualities such as *dayā*, *saulabhya*, *sauśīlya*, *vātsalya*, *aiśvarya* and *tejas*. The occasions when the Lord displayed these qualities caught the vision of seers like Vyāsa and Śuka who offered graphic descriptions of such occasions. The Āḻvārs dived deep into the ocean of these qualities through the love they had for Him and presented in their compositions their experience of those qualities. Divine Grace came to be looked upon by them as a powerful weapon to strike at the very root of *karma* which brings untold sufferings to the

---

4. P.Tv. 36.
5. Taitt. Up. 2; 4.
6. M.Tv. 56.
7. Nāṉ. Tv. 2.
8. Bh. G. 4: 11.

jīvas and it is but natural that they should not only seek earnestly to obtain it but also to expatiate on the imperative need to deserve it. Hence the centrality of the idea of Divine Grace in the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite system of philosophy. No wonder that Nammāḷvār and other Āḷvārs too insist on this idea. In their hymns are outlined the factors requisite for the attainment of Divine Grace as well as the effects it produces.

God seeks the soul even more than the soul seeks God, and it is therefore said that the soul-hunger of God is greater than the God-hunger of the soul. God is therefore aptly called the "Hound of Heaven" or the ravisher of the souls. The Hound of Heaven hunts the separated soul. The love-chase is so remorseless that the more the flight of the soul, the greater is the following of the Lord and the love-chase. The infinite auspicious qualities of Īśvara are dominated by the redemptive motive of Grace (*dayā*). Divine Grace is eternal and infinite, and it is immanent in all living beings. The descent of God typifies the soul-hunger of God and the idea transforms the Holy of holies into the ravisher of the souls. There is a reference in *Tiruvāymoḷi* to this beautiful concept of God's soul-hunger:

"Vārikoṇṭu u̲n̲n̲ai viḻuṅkuva̲n̲ kāṇil e̲n̲ṟu
Ārvu uṟṟa e̲n̲n̲ai oḻiya e̲n̲n̲il mu̲n̲n̲am
Pārittut tā̲n̲ e̲n̲n̲ai muṟṟap parukiṉā̲n̲."[9]

Using the metaphor of hunger and eating, the Āḷvār says that, as he was eagerly awaiting an opportunity to 'devour' the Lord, the Lord ravenously 'devoured' him wholesale, and thus fore-stalled him. The Lord has already, 'eaten' his soul piece-meal,[10] says the Āḷvār, and now He has devoured his 'whole' and quenched His thirst. No doubt God is food and drink to the Āḷvār; to Him the Āḷvār is food and drink.

An object that is charming fascinates and creates

---

9. T.V.M. 9.6: 10.
10. ibid. 9.6: 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.

avidity in man to possess it. As man's desire grows to have it, he is not satisfied with its mere possession by him and presence of it with him. He seeks to have it for himself, rather desires to devour it so that no one else could have any claim on it. This must be the reason for the depiction of a deep and intense longing to gaze passionately at a person as drinking the beauty of that person with the eyes.[11]

Though the Vaiṣṇavite definition of Godhead includes the *Upaniṣadic* idea of Brahman and Īśvara and *Pāñcarātra* idea of Bhagavān, its concept of God as *dayānidhi* exceeds them all. "The Lord is rich in mercy and has not *dayā* as His differentia but is *dayā* itself and is therefore impersonal. *Dayā* is for *dayā's* sake, and is not the fruit of righteousness, and is therefore not juristic or moralistic. It is neither vindictive nor retributive. It does not brook bartering at all by the arithmetical calculations of *puṇya-pāpa* and scheme of rewards and punishments. *Dayā* is spontaneous in nature and instantaneous in effect."[11a] It is the soul of the Lord Himself and it is the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the divine nature The Lord saves the righteous but, with infinite loving kindness, He seeks and forgives the wicked of their transgression. His juridical severity is surpassed by His forgiveness. He makes haste to redeem the wicked from their wicked course and gives them succour. This divine Grace is natural (*ṣvabhāvikā*) and unconditional (*nirhētuka*). God only waits for some pretext to save the soul. Even an act remotely connected with the Holy, such as the unwitting utterance of God's name, is sufficient to set the redemptive power of Grace to operate. In this act of operation of Grace, the office performed by Lakṣmī, the chief consort of Nārāyaṇa, is unique and significant. She is all tenderness towards the souls, her children, and

---

11. The queen Sudakṣiṇā is described to have drunk her husband with eyes which were as though fasting (*Raghuvaṁśa*) 2: 19 Janaka looked at the beauty of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa sitting by the side of Visvāmitra (K.R Pālakāṇṭam-kulamuṛai 2).

11.a. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣtadvaita*, p. 410.

intercedes with her Lord on their behalf. By virtue of her motherhood in relation to souls and wifehood in relation to the Lord, she is eminently fitted to play the role of mediator between the two. As Lord's Grace or Aruḷ is the Mother, the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite theism equates God-head with the dual self of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa or Śrīyahpati. This concept explains that while He loves rule, she rules love and transforms the love of law into the law of love. Surrender brings on the selves the Absolute rain of Grace which is bestowed and not merited by egoistic effort. Nammāḷvār refers to this Grace as "*His tiruvaruḷ*".[12] The Lord's lotus-like eyes are the fountain-head of this Grace. So the Āḷvār prays to the Lord to turn those blessed eyes towards him – "*Tāmaraik Kaṇkaḷāl nōkkāy*".[13] The never-ending cycle of *karma* is then transcended. All the fetters and ignorance recede away like a mirage which has been deceiving and teasing as though it were a beautiful pond of pure water in the desert. When self-renunciation is fully accomplished by giving up the lusts of the flesh, divine communion results. Nammāḷvār says that he has, by contemplation of the Lord and by the singing of His praises, completely divested himself of age-old *karma*[14]. He believes that he will remain free from the fear of hell for generations to come and that nothing will be impossible of attainment to him because the Lord has entered him, is not going to leave him and has weeded out all traces of *karma*.[15] "The Lord in His Grace has ordained me to sing of His glory, His *paratva* and *saulabhya*, and has dispelled the sins of not only myself, but all those associated with me, for generations to come".[16] "The Lord, solicitous of me, owned me and offered Himself up to me, and gave me all"[17] "By clasping

12. T.V.M. 8.7: 5. Periyāḷvār calls it 'Pēr aruḷ' (Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.3: 7).
13. ibid. 9.2: 1.
14. ibid. 2.6: 6.
15. ibid. 2.6: 7.
16. ibid. 2.7: 4.
17. ibid. 2.7: 11. cf. T.V.K. 397 "Tantatu uṉtaṉṉai koṇṭatu eṉtaṉṉai, caṅkarā ārkolō caturar" – 'What You gave me was Yourself; what I gave You was myself: who gets the better of the bargain :

the Lord I have completely dispelled my *karma*".[18] The last line of all the verses of this hymn[19] runs in the same strain. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār says; "I have no refuge other than Thy Grace......I have been redeemed on seeing Thee".[20] The Āḻvār declares that he will rely on none else than the Lord who ordained him through His grace to long for Him as the calf does for its mother cow.[21]

It has been explained that the working of *karma* can be considered as a kind of redemption and punishment as *dayā-kārya* or work of compassion It is meant for the redemption of the wrongdoer from his career of sin by the inflow of divine grace. Forgiveness is the foundation of the moral law, and redemption from sin is its religious fruition. To the logical intellect, the absolute is beyond description and definition. But to religious consciousness, He is the inescapable Redeemer. In His infinite mercy, He assumes suitable forms to recover, and reunite with, the lost self. The ascent of the self to the Absolute is not so valuable as the descent of God into evolutionary forms and into humanity. This quality of God is known in Viśiṣṭādvaitic philosophy as *saulabhya* or divine accessibility. *Karma* and other fetters are from one point of view fetters of ignorance and darkness which disappear when the light of the divine knowledge blazes forth. Nammāḻvār says that the Lord had stationed in his heart to dispel his nescience.[22] The Āḻvārs in general refer to *karma* as '*Iruḷ*' and '*Viṉai*'. Perhaps the references imply that these saints are equating '*Viṉai*' and '*Iruḷ*' as effect and cause. The great Tamil saint Tiruvaḷḷuvar speaks of "*Iruḷ cēr iruviṉai*"[23] and "*Iruḷ niṅki iṉpam payakkum*".[24] The Āḻvār refers to them as "*Iruḷār viṉai*"[25] – 'the darkness

18. ibid 3.10: 4.
19. ibid. 3.10.
20. Peri. Tm. 7.1:7.
21. ibid. 7.3: 2.
22. T.V.M. 1.7: 4.
23. Kuraḷ. 5.
24. ibid. 352.
25. T.V.R. 33.

of *karma* '. That cause of seed of all miseries is described as due to "*vinaip paṭalam*"[26] - 'the cloud of *karma*'. The real is obscured in this darkness and therefore the name and form of various things in the world are not visible in their real perspective and hides the Reality from vision. This darkness is torn away by the pure light of real knowledge which is the brightness of the Absolute.

Nammālvār who experienced the unsolicited Grace of the Divine describes it in the following terms ; "He made me an entity and reposed Himself in me"[27]; "the Lord who came to me unawares and redeemed me";[28] "without my knowledge Thou gavest me wisdom and did so much for me";[29] "Thou transformed my evil heart into good by making me chant Thy names and worship Thy feet with songs and a pure heart;"[30] "Thou gavest me the kind of heart which enables me to worship Thy feet in birth after birth chanting Thy names";[31] "my soul and Thine merged so that one could not tell them apart from each other";[32] and "what good did I do Him to deserve it that He has placed Himself in my heart?"[33]

Piḷḷai Lōkācaryār in his *Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam* through a series of telling similies brings out the mode of operation of divine Grace and shows how the Lord takes all the initiative for saving the souls. Much as a father who, even though he lives happily with his other sons, longs for the company of one of his sons who lives abroad in a distant land, so also the Lord, even though He enjoys the company of the Eternals and *muktas* in Vaikuṇṭha, cannot brook separation from the souls wandering in the sea of *samsāra*, and so sees to it that

26. P.Tv. 76.
27. T.V.M. 10.8: 9.
28. ibid. 1.7: 5.
29. ibid. 2.3: 2.
30. ibid. 2.7: 8.
31. ibid. 2.7: 7.
32. ibid. 4.3: 8.
33. ibid. 10.6: 8.

they are reminded of their links with Him by giving them their senses. Perhaps the Lord with the fear that on His direct manifestation they might grow jealous of Him and drive him out, approaches them invisibly like the mother taking up the sleeping baby in her bosom without disturbing its sleep. All the time He stays in their company and watches their doings they are reminded of their links with Him by giving them with solicitude, and though they may perform a number of acts of evil, He looks out for occasional unconscious good deeds on their part such as the casual mention of the Lord's name or the name of the town where there is the Lord's shrine, or casual unwitting service to His devotees. He collects the merits of these good deeds, magnifies them and stores them up for them so that these accumulate into great merit, just as the goldsmith collects tiny amounts of gold left behind on his touchstone with his wax and accumulates them into a sizable amount of gold. An instance of this kind of concern of the Divine for the human is to be found in *Lalitācarita* in *Śrī Viṣṇu Dharma*.[34]

Civajñāṉa yōkikaḷ explains the working of *karma* in the operation of the Divine Grace in his commentary on *Civa-jñānapōtam*. According to him all the good acts which the *jīvas* perform, bring on good results, but they are after all gold-fetters as opposed to iron-fetters of evil acts. The yōkikaḷ terms these good acts as '*Pacupuṇṇiyam*' because they are not done with the proper feeling of self-sacrifice in the name of God; they will be '*Civapuṇṇiyam*' only when they are performed in that spirit. In the former the egoism is not dead, whilst in the latter it is completely annihilated. The saint offers this explanation to show how one escapes from these fetters by doing good acts: though the *Pacupuṇṇiyam* is intended to benefit some others in society, because the Lord is omnipotent and all pervasive, this act consciously intended for some one else, goes unconsciously to please the Lord ultimately. In this manner *Pacupuṇṇiyam* leads to *Civa-puṇṇiyam*. No doubt by the performance of this act the result is the gold-fetters, but ultimately on account of accumulation

34. S.V.P. - Sūtras 381 and 382 (Śri P.B. Aṇṇaṅgarācāryārś edition).

of *Civapuṇṇiyam* the soul is transformed and it experiences the Divine Bliss.[35]

Again the Āḻvārs praise this Grace of the Lord many a time and in many ways. He is the Lord of Grace – '*Pēraru-ḷāḷaṉ*'[36] – according to Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. He is the munificent Lord who bestows His Grace to Nammāḻvār who is a devotee of God's devotees – "Aruḷperuvār aṭiyārtam aṭiyaṉēṟku āḷiyāṉ, aruḷ taruvāṉ amaikiṉṟāṉ."[37] Parāṅkuśa says: "Kuṟikkoḷ jñāṉaṅkaḷāl eṉai ūḻi cey tavamum, kiṟikkoṇṭu ippiṟappē cila nāḷil eytiṉaṉ yāṉ"[38] – 'Through the Divine Grace I, a poor person, could, within a few days, attain to accomplishments which are possible of achievement only through *yoga* and *sādhana* for generations'. When God's Grace flows freely no one can prevent it. The saint says: "Though I chanted the praise of the Lord with discus in hand as my Dark Gem *(karumāṇikkam)*, in hollow fashion, and was wallowing in *samsāra*, I got the rewards of a true devotee. When God's Grace operates who can stifle it?"[39]; "when I was helplessly tossed about like a boat in the stormy sea of *samsāra*, He with His divine Form with discus and conch in his hands took pity on me and merged with me to release me";[40] "Āṉāṉ āḷuṭaiyāṉ eṉṟu ahtē koṇṭu ukantu vantu, tānē iṉṉaruḷ ceytu eṉṉai muṟṟavum tāṉ āṉāṉ"[41] – 'Taking me at my word that I was His slave, He affectionately blessed me with grace and became my all-in-all'. It is only by His Grace the Lord entered him even though he did not seek Him. Says the Āḻvār: "The Lord whom I did not think of seeking and uniting with myself at all came of His own accord, fascinated my heart, and united with my body and life. How can He part from me

---

35. *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram*, pp. 1214–15.
36. Peri. Tm. 9.5 : 4.
37. T.V.M. 10.6 : 1.
38. ibid. 2.3 : 8. Note Piḷḷāṉ's comment on this. The *Īṭu* refers to the story of Dadhibhāṇḍa.
39. ibid. 5.1 : 1.
40. ibid. 5.1 : 9.
41. ibid. 5.1 : 10.

hereafter?"[42] "He will put me on the road to *mokṣa*, removing all hurdles, and liberating me from the two kinds of *karma*, and freeing me from illusory attachment, and finally making me lose my heart to Him."[43] The glorious Lord will remove two kinds of *karma (puṇya* and *pāpa)* – "Perumai uṭaiya pirāṉār irumai viṉai kaṭivārē".[44] The very contemplation of the excellent form of the Lord ensures freedom from the bondage of sin and merit alike.[45] The Āḻvār terms our *karma* as 'bushes of diseases' *(ceṭiyār nōykaḷ)*.[46]. The immortal poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar has aptly remarked that to those who are attempting to rid themselves of their future births, even their body is too much for them – "Piṟappaṟukkal uṟṟārkku uṭampum mikai".[47] When the soul turns Godward forgetting its erstwhile identification with the imperfection and aims at communion with the perfection it enjoys freedom from this disease, and the bliss of spiritual health. God is therefore the medicine – "*viṉaitīrmaruntu*".[48] He is the sweet medicine, according to Nammāḻvar, that dispels the sinfulness of the devotees.[49] He is the repository of wealth, the medicine of all ills, and the One Who saves man from getting destroyed by the five senses.[50] The Eternals praise Him as the medicine which gives them the joy of His experience.[51] The Lord is also spoken of as '*Amutu*' in so many places by the Āḻvār.

Nammāḻvār, when he attains realization, transcends the endless see-saw of *karma* and ethics. It is a negation of moral laws; it is rather their fulfilment and transcendence to the higher, more wonderful and more mysterious harmony of the Absolute. In the Absolute, all the contradictions,

42. ibid. 1.7 : 7.
43. ibid. 1.5 : 10.
44. ibid. 1.6 : 9; I.Tv. 67; Peri. Tm. 6.3 : 4.
45. ibid. 5.1 : 6.
46. ibid. 2.6 : 7 cf. ibid. 6.10 : 7.
47. Kuṟaḷ 345.
48. T.V.M. 7.1: 4.
49. ibid. 3.4: 5.
50. ibid. 1.7: 2.
51. ibid. 9.3: 4.

all the *dvandvas* or pairs of opposites like success and failure pleasure and pain are transcended and harmonized. According to Pūtat-tālvār the man who meditates on the feet of the Lord is not elated at the possession of wealth, nor does he feel dispirited when what he possesses is lost.[52] Nammālvār emphasizes this importance of ethics. He speaks of the removal of the faults, the erroneous notions of '*I*' and '*Mine*';[53] once the worldly pleasures and worldly attachment are given up *mokṣa* is immediately attained.[54] Therefore true renunciation is of the mind. The false sense of prestige and vain desire inhering in the mind should vanish. The God's devotees are described as those whose minds are saturated with God's love. Nammālvār describes them as those who take care of themselves in all their births. He calls them "*Paramar*"[55] – 'the great men'; "*Nātar*"[56] – 'the lords'; "*Āluṭaiyārkaḷ*"[57] – 'those to whom he is a slave'; "*Perumakkaḷ*"[58] – 'superior men' and so on. He refers to the three types of devotees.[59] "*Cayame aṭimai talai ninrār*" – 'the kind of service of which the depth is only known to those to whom the very performance of the service is itself the reward'; "*nīkkamil aṭiyār*" – 'that kind of service which is rendered to God ever in His company'; and "*kōtil aṭiyār*" – 'that kind of service which is flawless'. Service is said to be tinged with few when, in the idea of serving God direct and to the exclusion of His Elect, the element of pride enters, namely, the pride that he is face to face with God, and that he is preferred beyond others. This was present *passively* in Bharata (first type), *actively* in Lakṣmaṇa (second type), but *entirely* absent in Ṣatṛughna.

---

52. I.Tv. 45.
53. T.V.M. 1.2: 3; 2.9: 9.
54. ibid. 1.2: 5.
55. ibid. 3.7: 1.
56. ibid. 3.7: 2.
57. ibid. 3.7: 3.
58. ibid. 3.7: 4.
59. ibid. 8.10: 2.

It is said that doing good to others is the highest *Dharma*. Tāyumāṉa Aṭikaḷ says: "Aṉpar paṇi ceyya eṉai āḷākki viṭṭuviṭṭāl, iṉpanilai tāṉē vantu eytum"[60] – the state of happiness will automatically come to one who is made to serve others'. Internal purity engenders this state of mind where sympathy and pity become almost an instinct. Tiruvaḷḷuvar calls this state of mind as "Maṉanalam"[61] – 'goodness of mind' – which according to him brings future bliss[66]. Truly Nāñciyar has said that "if when seeing the suffering of others, one's pity is excited and one ejaculates 'oh', one may know of oneself as a true Vaiṣṇavite and such a person can be sure of his or her salvation. To be a Vaiṣṇavite is to belong to God, and to belong to God is to be like God Himself i.e., conform to His ideals, one of them being to be 'the friend of all creatures'.[62] When this sympathy is absent, there is no hope of salvation. When the feeling of desolation overtakes Nammāḷvār and he begins to condemn himself, he feels a revulsion at his imagined unsympathetic mind. 'I have not ever given alms' says the Āḷvār, 'in charity, nor drinks to the thirsty' – "*Iṭakillēṉ oṉṟu aṭṭakillēṉ*".[63]

To yearn for His sight, it is essential that the *jīva* should have the heart rid of all the impurities. A heart that is purified would have enough control over itself and would not tend to be tempted by worldly attractions and so would continue to feel the unique nature of His *dayā* and other qualities and value them highly. Those who suffer from worldly ills will have to control their senses and get themselves obsorbed in the experience of His ever fruitful qualities.[64] The Āḷvār was able to have control over the senses only through God's Grace.[65] Every accessibility could be said to crown all His auspicious qualities, as through it, He

60. *Tāyumāṉavar Pāṭal:* Parāparakkaṇṇi – 155.
61. Kuṟaḷ – 459.
62. Bhag. Viṣ. Book I. 1.2: 1 (Commentary).
63. T.V.M. 4.7: 9; cf. ibid., 5.1: 4. 5, 6.
64. ibid. 2.8: 4.
65. ibid. 7.1: 7.

gets easily mixed up with high and low and enables them to have communion with Him.[66] His transcendence does not suffer even though He becomes accessible to all[67]. Those who commit sins act against the commands of God, but God has sympathy (*kāruṇya*) for them and enters into them and fills them, giving them the experience of His presence and of this quality.[68] The Lord who is in *Paramapada* comes down and attracts the mind of the Āḻvār, thus revealing how He is easy of reach to any one who is earnest to get at Him.[69] He is the Lord of gods and so He is at the highest position which is beyond the reach of all, including gods. The Āḻvār says that he is mean and low, indicating his or any *jīva's* position at the lowest level. Not only is the self thus an abode of all defects, but is having not even a single merit or virtue which could make him deserve the commendation of the wise. This is in wide contrast to the Lord who has no defects and is the abode of auspicious qualities. The Lord did not mind the littleness of the Āḻvār. As the Lord of Tirumalai, He possesses a body of supreme lustre and has passion for the Āḻvār. This suggests His *vātsalya* and also His ever-readiness to be of help to His devotees.[70] The little act, like uttering His name or the name of His place, is enough for Him to stand steadfast by His devotees without deserting them.[71] The Āḻvār uttered the name '*Tirumāliruñcōlai*' the place of the Lord. At once the Lord came to the Āḻvār with His consort Śrī and filled his heart - "Tirumāliruñcōlaimalai eṉṟēṉ; eṉṉa, Tirumāl vantu eṉneñcu niṟaiyap-pukuntāṉ".[72] The Lord made an announcement assuredly to Ajuna that those who seek His feet would be rid of their sufferings and sins.[73] To fulfil His obligation, He protects people in every birth which they take and takes them in a particular birth of theirs to His

66. ibid. 1.3: 2.
67. Vide Parācara Paṭṭar's remark (*Īṭu* on T.V.M. 1.3: 2).
68. T.V.M. 5.1: 7: Piḷḷāṉ's remark (*Īṭu* on T.V.M. 5.1: 7).
69. ibid. 5.3: 9.
70. ibid. 3.3: 4.
71. ibid. 2.7 : 3.
72. ibid. 10.8 : 1.
73. Bh. G. 18: 66.

place and offers them the right occasion to render service. In this respect He is verily the father (*appan*) and exhibits His inborn nature of being true to His word.[74] It is really surprising that the Āḷvār finds it difficult to control himsef on hearing some one utter the name '*Nārāyaṇa*' which he himself does not care to utter. He then tries to search for His presence, while He, Who is omnipresent, has taken pity on him and stays with him days and nights without a break. This is due to His confidence in the Āḷvār [75] He who is ever filled with all good qualities (*nampi*) has chosen not to leave away the Āḷvār.[76] His liberality is displayed by offering Himself wholly to the Āḷvār whom He has made His own. He is not simply the Absolute but the divine wish-yielding tree (*karpakam*). This quality is further attested by the Āḷvār referring to Him as having the good mountain Vēṅkaṭam and as Dāmodara.[77] His tenderness is evidenced in His occupying the mind of the self of His own accord, although the fact is that the self is not competent to know that he is the servant of Him.[78] His quality of sympathy will only yield fruitful results, while that of deities other than Him would lead to no good end.[79]

Among the *arcā* forms, specific mention is to be made, by way of implication, of the Tirumalai Hills which makes the flame of the heart of eternal selves shine with full radiance and puts out the blazing fire of *karma* of all those who do not care for God after obtaining their desires from Him, those who ignore Him after getting their isolation (*kaivalya*) and those who worship Him for ever to get final release.[80] This is mysterious since one kind of fire, namely, sins, is destroyed, and another kind of fire, namely, devotion or love, is made effulgent [81]

74. T.V.M. 3.7: 7.
75. ibid. 1.10: 8.
76. Iṭu on T.V.M. 1.10: 8.
77. T.V.M. 2.7: 11.
78. I.Tv. 16.
79. M.Tv. 15.
80. ibid. 26.
81. cf. The wind behaves as the friend of the fire which burns the forest but that itself puts out a (burning) lamp. Who will be the friend of the weak? (original: a Sanskrit Śloka).

The realization of the value and purpose of these qualities which show the Lord to be both transcendent and immanent is capable of causing thrill even to one whose heart is immune to emotional stress. Recapitulation of this experience will afford the *jīvas* occasional vistas of bright joy amidst the dark and dense clouds of worldly sufferings. The Āḷvārs, who are the divine beings descended on earth for the welfare of humanity, are immersed in the deep sea of God-realization and as such have perennial enjoyment of bliss, having nothing to suffer from worldly ills. Admiration of these qualities arouses in the mind of the self a state "of desire, vague and disturbed, very real, and liable to be very intense as a possession of the soul".[82] With the repeated occasions that are obtained by the self for enjoying such qualities, this desire turns into a profound and lasting ambition. The idea of the objects of this desire becomes a steadfast property of the soul. This could be termed as the love which the self has for God. As this love becomes deep rooted, the self is affected by certain reactions. "The things that charmed us lose their colour; the things we had admired seem debased; our dearest affections cease to fill our hearts. The things of the world no longer hold us; each of them now awakens in us the idea of its opposite. In all the objects presented to our sight we see only the distortion, the empty image, wan and dead, of the living idea perfect and definite, which sensible realities are powerless to express. We conceive as the supreme object of our desires, the infinite, the eternal, the perfect - God".[83]

The Āḷvārs have laid emphasis both by their lives and their hymns on God-love. *Aṉpu*,[84] *vēṭkai*,[85] *kātal*,[86] *avā*[87] (the words meaning 'love') used in their works for and towards God is the most noteworthy feature of the hymns of the *Nālāyiram*.

---

82. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 367.
83. ibid. pp. 367–368.
84. T.V.R. 2; T.V.C. 2; Peri. Tm. 8: T.V.M. 6.10 : 2.
85. T.V.M. 2.1 : 10; 9.6 : 1; 10.3 : 2.
86. T.V.R. 59; T.V.C. 2; I.Tv. 56; T.V.M. 5.3 : 4; 5.5 : 10; 7.3 : 6; 7.3 :8.
87. T.V.R. 64. 84; T.V.C. 2; T.V.M. 10.10 : 10.

But the traditional order of evolution of devotion is from *kātal* to *aṉpu*, from *aṉpu* to *vēṭkai* and from *vēṭkai* to *avā*. Yet it will be noticed that in respect of the Āḻvārs the stages of evolution do not strictly follow this order, or precede or succeed one another in strict conformity. This perhaps implies that the Āḻvārs' *bhakti* includes and transcends all the four stages at the same time all the time.[88] Or another explanation could be offered to this. The saints have the moments of ecstasy to be followed by occasions of disappointment. Severe longing was also given to their lot to obtain union with God.[89] The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain their expressions of ecstatic experiences as they were having then and also subsequently. As they had varied experiences alternately at the will of God, one cannot expect the graded development of their love for God. In fact, the saints take the generic name, 'Āḻvār'[90] (one who gets immersed) from the fact of their being eternally immersed in God-love. While to the Advaitin God-love or *bhakti* is only a means to the attainment of *jñāna* or true-knowledge, to the Āḻvārs, and indeed to all the Vaiṣṇavite *ācāryas*, *bhakti* is the *summum bonum* of religious experience. It is both the means and the end. It is an *upāya* or means, since it is a sure method of obtaining Divine Grace; it is also a *puruṣārtha* or goal, since there is no higher state to be realised by man than to love God as an end in itself. Usually *upāya* is difficult and hard and not very sweet in the process. But here *bhakti* as *upāya* is indescribably sweet and pleasant. In fact, before the practice of *bhakti* even the pleasures of *paramapada* pale into insignificance. *Sādhana bhakti* itself is so sweet indeed that there is no desire to think beyond it of *sādhya bhakti*. The sayings of several of the Āḻvārs are to the effect that the attainment of Vaikuṇṭha is not to be preferred to the enjoyment obtainable here by loving Him and singing about Him.[91] The Āḻvārs,

---

88. A.H. Sūt. 98 (Commentary).
89. *An Idealistic View of Life*, pp. 93, 94.
90. The word '*Āḻvār*' means 'one who dives deep into divinity' or one who is immersed in God-love and God-bliss.
91. T.V.R. 108; T.V.C. 2; T.V.M. 2.9 : 1, 5; T.M. 2. I.Tv. 90; cf. Deśika's *Varadarāja Pañcasat*, 49.

mystics as they are, have the instinct for the infinite and to them the best proof of the existence of God is the immediate experience of God, a soul-sight of Him here and now and a revelling in His love. Just as famine-stricken ryots who long for rainfall are not satisfied with the weather chart, so also these mystics are not interested in the dialectic and divided thinking or in rational arguments. As the former are satisfied only with a down pour of rain, the latter too are satisfied only in the integral experience of the deity.

While this amount of God-love is seen in every Āḷvār, Nammāḷvār's God-love is on a level far more exalted and far more intense. It is more an organic craving than a mere mental feeling. His is a consuming passion. The Āḷvār's songs of anguish, and his songs of rhapsody, both have their origin in this passion for God. While all devotees of God long mentally for communion with Him, the Āḷvār pants for that communion with every pore and cell of his body and with every beat of his heart. In one beautiful hymn are shown the hunger and craving not only of the saint but of every one of his senses and faculties for God-realization.[92] His mind, his mouth, his hands, his eyes and ears and even his soul - each faculty vies with the other in throbbing for consummation and fruition in the matter of God-enjoyment. And one very noteworthy feature of this very peculiar state is that each faculty is anxious to obtain realization not only in the manner legitimately and normally obtainable by it, but by exceeding and transcending even its functional limitations, - a sort of synaesthetic interchange of functions. Thus the hands want to praise Him with lofty words, the eyes desire to worship Him with flowers, the ears long to see Him and so on, in addition, of course, to respectively worshipping, seeing, hearing etc., in the exercise of their respective legitimate and normal functions. This extra-sensuous desire of each sense in the matter of God-enjoyment does not appear to have been given expression by any one else. The Āḷvār appears to justify

92. T.V.M. 3.8.

93. ibid. 9.9: 9.

such a longing on his part, and to adopt the same procedure in which God Himself sports by talking with His eyes, and by looking through the melodious tunes of His flute.[93] This is a singular and single instance of the mystic realisation of the Āḷvār which really baffles comprehension and classification. This super-sensuous and organic love and infatuation towards God is the hall-mark of this Āḷvār's compositions. He makes no secret of it. In tact, he avowedly attempts to attain, and ultimately attains, God through love which he terms as '*matinalam*'[94] which Rāmānuja translates as '*bhakti-rūpapanna-jñānam*'.

Nammāḷvār uses the word '*avā*' very frequently in his hymns. The word signifies an intense craving. This *avā* or the God-infatuation of the Āḷvār can be seen to have been mentioned in all his four works. This '*avā*' is seen sprouting in his first work *Tiruviruttam* where he says: "kayya poṉ āḻi veṇcaṅkoṭum kāṇpāṉ *avāvuvan* nāṉ"[95] – 'I long to have sight of the One with the golden discus and the white conch in hand'. In the next work, *Tiruvāciriyam*, this *avā* begins to assault and outgrow the Āḷvār. He says:

"Ulaku paṭaittu uṇṭa entai aṟaikaḻal
Cutarppūn tāmarai cūṭutaṟku avāvu
Āruyir uruki ukka nēriya
Kātal aṉpil iṉpuīṉ tēṟal
Amuta veḷḷattāṉ āmciṟappu viṭṭu"[96]

– 'The suffusion in a flood of joy of loving devotion springing from the soul's transport of longing to place the decorated feet of the Lord on his head is an incomparably great experience'. This infinite *avā*, it is seen, begins to flow like a river in his third work *Periya tiruvantāti* where he uses the word '*aṉpu*'. The Āḷvār says: "arukum cuvaṭum teriya uṇarōm; aṉpē perukum mika......nummai numakku".[97] 'We

94. ibid. 1.1: 1.
95. T.V.R. 84; cf. ibid. 64.
96. T.V.C. 2.
97. P.Tv. 8.

do not know how to approach You or the means of access to You. Yet our longing for You keeps growing'. The love which flowed like a river becomes as big as the sea in his fourth and final work *Tiruvāymoḷi* where in one hymn the Āḷvār says: *Pēramar kātal kaṭalpuraiya viḷaivitta kāramar mēṉi nam Kaṇṇaṉ*"[98] - 'Our cloud-hued Kṛṣṇa who has expanded my love for Him (which has a big scandal in store with it) as wide as the sea'. It then becomes bigger than the sea - "*Kātal kaṭalin mikap peritāl*"[99] as the Āḷvār says; next it almost immediately grows to such universal and cosmic dimensions that it envelops the entire earth, the seven seas and even the immeasurable vast space. In the words of the Āḷvār, "*Maṇṭiṇi jñālamum ēl kaṭalum nīḷvicumpum kaḻiyap peritāl*".[100] God does not vouchsafe His full Grace even now, and so the Āḷvār whips up his love to even greater proportions. So far his love has grown big enough to envelop all matter, the entire *acetana tattva;* now it begins to excel the next bigger *tattva*, the individual soul, the *jīva*. He feels that his individual soul is too small to hold this divine love (here he calls it '*vēṭkai*') and so he says: "*Akam uyir akam-akamtōṟum uḷ pukku, āviyiṉ param alla vēṭkai*"[101] - 'the innermost recesses of the soul are perhaps inadequate to accommodate the vast cosmic dimensions of my yearing (*vēṭkai*) for the Lord has penetrated and soaked in it'. Thus the love outgrows the Āḷvār and by degrees outgrows and envelopes the Lord Himself. Not till He, the biggest Being (Brahmaṉ), is made small by the fast-growing passion of the Āḷvār's God-love, does God deign to vouchsafe His love and grace unreservedly to the Āḷvār. The Āḷvār says: "When my longing for You expanded, deepened, and enveloped the vast spaces, You enlarged Yourself into something greater than by longing (which comprehended the three *tattvas* of Viśiṣṭādvaita (*acit*, *cit* and *Īśvara*) and merged Yourself into me, and thus satisfied my great yearning".[102] The Āḷvār now finds and

98. T.V.M. 5.3: 4.
99. ibid. 7.3: 6.
100. ibid. 7.3: 8.
101. ibid. 10.3: 2.
102. ibid. 10.10: 10.

realises that he has reached his goal. In this very strain he sings in the closing verse of this hymn. In the last line "*Cūḻntu ataṉil periya eṉ avā aṟac cūḻntāyē*" he describes his *avā* as one which enveloped Him and outgrew Him; the Lord, on His part, outgrows and envelops that *avā* and thereby holds the Āḻvār in His embrace.

The development of the saint's God-love as seen in and through his four works is something marvellous and unique in the history of Divine Love in any language and literature. That the love of a small child sitting under the tamarind tree in the Ātināta Temple in Āḻvār-tirunakari could assume supra cosmic proportions and could even transcend Him, who as Tirivikrama has transcended everything and everybody, has been demonstrated by the songs sung by this super-mystic. His God-hunger was intense enough to consume that very God who was the object of his love. And it is because of such hunger and thirst for God evinced by the great saint that Parācara Bhatta has referred to him as the embodiment of '*Kṛṣṇa-Tṛṣṇā-Tattvam*'.

No descent other than Kṛṣṇa's exercised such a fascination over the saint's mind as this one. The very thoughts of the birth of the Lord, how He grew up and how He managed the Mahābhārata war melt his soul.[103] The incidents pertaining to Kṛṣṇa's life assail his soul in all their freshness, and steadily melt and eat it away. That his poems abound in references to Kṛṣṇa, His deeds and misdeeds, His *guṇas* and *aguṇas*, are but a corollary to the saint's great devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Every thing good was set apart for his Kaṇṇaṉ. Even when the Āḻvār was in a peculiar mood wherein he thinks, talks and acts as if he were himself the God of the universe, the only descent of the Lord that he imagines himself to be is Kṛṣṇa. The Āḻvār says: "It was I who lifted the Govardhana. It was I that subdued the seven fierce bulls. It was I that grazed the calves of Gokulam and protected the herds of the cows. It was I that was the chief

103. ibid. 5.10: 1.

of the *gōpas*".[104] This experience of the saint gets justified from a passage of the *Upaniṣad*.[105] Brahman gets the experience that It is everything. Gods, sages and men had the realization that they are Brahman or anything else. Sage Vāmadeva had adopted this process and had the experience that He was Manu. The *jīvas*, even of the ordinary kind, could have the full experience of Brahman, if they meditate upon It and intuit that they are Brahman. It must, however, be borne in mind that when a self meditates 'I am that' it must include Brahman or *Paramātman* within '*I*' and then meditate. Even gods cannot obstruct this kind of meditation. Prahlāda had a similar experience.[106]

Many of the hymns sung by the Āḻvār in a state of the lady-love, her mother and her companion are packed with words every syllable of which being loaded with indescribably acute God-love. At times the Āḻvār gets into an exultant mood and imagines himself as the specially favoured devotee. Such periods are very rare, unlike the periods of depression which are more numerous and frequent. In one Tiruvāymoḻi, the Āḻvār is seen indulging in a feeling of elation and that hymn is bound up with Kṛṣṇa. The Āḻvār begins the hymn with a verse in the language of satisfaction and in a spirit of security by exclaiming that he has learnt day and night to expatiate upon the inexplicable and inscrutable sporting of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All the worlds cannot be equal to him as he has learnt to spend his time in love, his mind revelling in the contemplation of the sports of that sweet Flutist.[117] In fact, all the verses of this hymn run in the same strain and show us the pulse of the heart of the venerable saint being soaked with Kṛṣṇa-love. This is the only place where it is seen that the thirst of the Āḻvār for Kṛṣṇa is being quenched in a measure. In almost all other places where Kṛṣṇa is referred to the saint is found thirsting and throbbing, pulsating and

---

104. ibid. 5.6: 6.
105. Br. Up. 1.4: 10.
106. V.P. 1.19: 85, 86.
107. ibid. 6.4: 1.

palpitating for the union with Kṛṣṇa. To Nammāḷvār, in short, Kṛṣṇa was everything. He was the food that he ate, the water that he drank, and the betel that he chewed - "*Uṇṇum cōṟu, parukum nir, tiṉṉum veṟṟilaiyum ellām Kaṇṇaṉ*".[108] The commentators on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* very often put down the Āḷvār's intense longing for Kṛṣṇa to a feeling of frustration engendered by the thought that if he had olny been born a week earlier he would have been blessed enough to worship the Lord in flesh and blood.[109] Parācara Bhatta's disciples asked him once: "How is it Master, that all the Āḷvārs have showed a preference to God as Lord Kṛṣṇa, not as Lord Rāma, or any other descent?" Bhatta's reply was this: "When a man is subjected to bereavement from his loved ones, the grief caused thereby descreases as time elapses; when it is fresh, its pangs are acute. So to the Āḷvārs, Kṛṣṇāvatāra is nearest to them in time; that is, more recent than all the *avatāras*. Hence their lamentations were great. Nammaḷvār who was born just forty five days after the Ascension of Lord Kṛṣṇa, groaned thus from love: 'Sinful man that I am, I have been born six weeks late! Ah! that what had reached lip (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) has slipped away".[110] Periyāḷvār's hunger for God is somewhat peculiar. He says that his hungry days are not those on which he forgoes food and drink but those on which he fails to worship at the Feet of the Lord with the chosen flowers culled from the four *Vedas*.[111]

On His part, the Lord too finds it difficult to leave off the devotee whom He had chosen to bless and whose heart He had occupied. He will not leave the heart of that person who has found His presence there.[112] The Āḷvār who has

---

108. ibid. 6.7: 1.

109. *Ittin Tamilākkam* - Vol. V. - Preface to Commentary on 5-10 ("Piṟanta").

110. *Bhag. Vis.* Book V. Preface to the Commentary 5.10. "*Piṟanta*". The chronology in the statement is undoubtedly incredible. The intensity of love of the Āḷvār to God only is to be taken into account.

111. *Periyāḷ. Tm.* 5.1: 6.

112. P.Tv. 35.

realized that the Lord took His abode in his heart in order to dispel nescience from there and to lead him to do good and shines there with singular splendour, feels that there is nothing which could prompt him to leave Him.[113] One more reason for his inability to leave Him is that He had come and settled in his heart out of a liking for him.[114]

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār says that he would not give up the great joy he was having by his communion with the Lord. He could not also forget His charming person.[115] He had kept Him steadfast in his heart and will not leave Him on any account.[116] He will not even think of any other deity.[117] Pēyāḷvār is happy to find the Lord who lies in the milky ocean, whose complexion is like the stagnant ocean and who is a remedy for getting rid of the hell-like worldly existence, present in his mind.[118] The Lord left the fine couch of Ādiśeṣa and has occupied the bed of the mind of this Āḷvār.[119]

It is very difficult to know Him.[120] He presents Himself to those who are true or straightforward in their behaviour though they have no mind to their credit. He does not appear to those who are unscrupulous or false in their conduct. It is at Śrī Raṅgam that this Lord who is charming to behold is present, setting aside any doubt that may arise for one who learns that there is God[121] One must therefore be grateful to God who had done good to him like a father, mother and others and having shown him the righteous path.[122] He is the relation of all sorts to the Āḷvār, namely, wife of fish-like

113. T.V.M. 1.7: 4. cf. ibid. 1.7: 5, 6.
114. ibid. 2.6:7.
115. Peri. Tm. 6.3: 1.
116. ibid. 6.3: 2, 6.
117. ibid. 6.3: 5.
118. Mū. Tv. 3, 83.
119. ibid. 15.
120. ibid. 11.
121. T.M. 15.
122. P. Tv. 5.

eyes, good issues and respectable parents. He is also the vast wealth.[123]

Beholding the charming person of the Lord at Tirumāliruñcōlai, Periyāḷvār managed to leave his attachment for his body and so could not leave Him.[124] He has encircled the Lord and so would not allow Him to get away from him. He requests the Lord not to hide Himself from him.[125] He could not approach any ordinary fellow for favour, as it would belittle the greatness of the Lord as a saviour.[126] This Āḷvār is happy to state that he could not have a place of refuge like the Lord where he could find a shelter after much wandering or got water to quench his thirst anywhere else.[127]

It is a herculean task to control the mind even if one knows well that one should be rendering service to the Lord. The mind behaves in its way going off the righteous path.[128] Though some could realize His presence within one's self, there are not many who could have the experience of Him. Those who extol Him throgh poetry will have only the consolation that they are singing in praise of Him, but really speaking they could not have a vision of Him.[129] Those can know Him, if they can control the five senses, forego the activities like taking food and sleeping, becoming afraid as to the occurrence of certain undesirable incidents and enjoyment of sensual pleasures, keep the quality of *sattva* in a dominant position by suppressing *rajas* and *tamas* and thus seek to cut at the root of worldly existence.[130] This is only deep meditation or *yoga*.[131] It is also possible to direct the mind towards the Lord's feet but only those who could have control

---

123. T.V.M. 5.1: 8.
124. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.3. 1.
125. ibid. 5.3: 2.
126. ibid. 5.3 : 3.
127. ibid. 5.3 : 4.
128. P.Tv. 32.
129. Mū. Tv. 84.
130. T.V.L.K. ll, 15 to 19.
131. Peri. Tm. 5.6 : 9.

over the activity of their five senses and realize that they are subordinates to the Lord can hope to do this.[132] God-realization is not altogether an impossibility. He will Himself be present for realization in the mind of the self.[133] The intensity of this realization would be in proportion to the earnestness of the *jīva* to behold Him.[134]

Nammāḷvār grows very happy to have had the experience of the great benefactor and master of all. People of seven generations prior to him and subsequent to him have gained the distinction of being the devotees of the Lord, through his realization of God.[135] Periyāḷvār says that He has entered the heart as a preceptor, removed the defects there and placed His feet on his head.[136]

God-realization is not the result of the operation of any means of valid cognition such as perception, inference, or verbal authority. The sense-organs are totally incompetent to apprehend God and for that reason, inference which depends on the working of the perceptive process, cannot operate. Verbal testimony can only give rise to the knowledge of the deity. These *pramāṇas* do not therefore operate and as such could not be trusted for obtaining the experience of God. The Lord is beyond knowledge, contemplation and thought.[137] He is One with unparalleled glory.[138] He transcends everything else and all forms of ordinary knowledge. He is realized as an experience through intuition or mystic experience. He is therefore described as One who has no equal or comparison – "*Taṉ oppār il appaṉ*".[139] That He transcends other kinds of knowledge excepting mystic experience is brought out by Nammāḷvār as that he cannot express adequately the quality

132. M.Tv. 30.
133. P.Tv. 55.
134. ibid. 28, 29.
135 T.V.M. 2.7 : 1; cf. ibid. 2.7 : 4.
136. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.2 : 8.
137. T.V.M. 6.9 : 11. cf. ibid. 5.5 : 11.
138. ibid. 6.10 : 10.
139. ibid. 6.3 : 9.

of the Lord[140] He is the Lord of the form which cannot be known as anything distinct and which cannot be classified according to the ordinary sources of our knowledge.[141] It is not possible to produce any evidence, because the Absolute is not something objective like the things or objects of the world. It is the integral experience or *Paripūrṇa Brahmānubhava* which is more than the perceptual, rational and intuitional aspects. It is the direct apprehension of the *svarūpa* or form of Brahman and the comprehension of its character or *guṇa*. It is, as it were, the recorded experiences of *Upaniṣadic* seers and the Āḷvārs. The Lord is impossible to be reached even by contemplation by the mind for the reason that mind is also made up of matter. He transcends matter. Even the *Vedas* cannot reach Him: "*Nāṉ maṟaiyum toṭarāta pālakaṉ*";[142] *Nāṉ maṟaikaḷ tēṭi eṉṟum kāṇamāṭṭāc-celvaṉ*".[143] Even those who have reached higher spheres cannot measure Him, measure His infinite greatness: "*Amararkkum ariyāṉ*"[144] – 'He is rarity to even the celestials'. His glory is unequalled and unsurpassed.[145]

The direct intuitive experience which the Āḷvārs had of God is more real and is fuller than that which is had through perception. This is mystic experience which is ineffable, transcendent and passive. "It is an immediate consciousness of God not to be mediated by the intellect or the will of the individual or of society, but attributed directly to God Himself".[146] However much an individual attempts to have this, he fails in obtaining it as there is nothing in him which he could make use of for the purpose. It is this aspect of the experience that is stated to be unobtainable through study, intelligence and rich learning. The Lord shows Himself to him

---

140. ibid. 3.1 : 3; cf. ibid. 2.5 : 9, 10.
141. ibid. 3.4.
142. Peri. Tm. 4.1 : 6.
143. ibid. 4.8 : 7.
144. T.V.M. 10.5 : 9.
145. ibid. 1.7 : 10.
146. *A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 432.

whom He chooses for the purpose and that person gets it.[147] The mystic gets the integral experience of the Lord together with the entire or part of the world which forms a portion of Him and which He chooses to show to His men.

Though mystic experience is ineffable, it is not unanalysable. For others who have yet to enter into the realm of mysticism, two aspects are noticeable in the experience of the mystic. In one of them, namely, emotional, the mystic has as intense feeling which is not altogether without rich content. Some central idea, as intellectual certainty, is had by him through immediate intuition of reality The mystic is able to communicate this. The more intense is emotion the more personal God becomes and less cosmic also. It is the personal Deity that tends to arouse sentiment in the self. This is the reason for the popularity and appeal of the later *Upaniṣads* like *Svetāsvatara*, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Purāṇas* as inspiring belief.[148] The other aspect of mysticism is cognitive and ideational. The mystic experience has immediacy, expressive of directness and stands by itself with the presentative character. Hence the ultimate truth is presented there as a Reality already established beyond doubt, not requiring any representative knowledge to prove it.[149] Neotic tendency is another mark of mystic experience which enables the mystic to have the reality revealed face-to-face like his sense of eye or ear would do. It makes the mystic speak emphatically about reality and its fundamental character is what is frequently called 'self transcendence', the direct cognition of reality other or larger than the cognitive state of consciousness itself.[150] The consciousness of the mystic is not only emotional but intuitive from the unknown 'Beyond'. The union between God and the mystic is actual perception of God.[151] However, the cognitive and emotional elements of mystic experience are blended together and become mutually influential. It is not

147. Kath. Up. 1.2:23.
148. *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 348–49.
149. cf. ibid. pp. 400–01.
150. Cited as the view of Professor Ewer in ibid. p. 405.
151. View of Father Maynard cited. ibid. p. 412.

therefore possible to dissect mystic experience in two independent forms and analyse them without getting one related to the other.

When ecstasy is said to be the chief mark of mystic experience, it does not mean that the mystic has to his lot only joy and not pain. Pain and delight take their positions alternately. The feeling of pain could be the result of not having the continued vision of God. Ecstatic joy comes to the self of its own accord and makes him mystic who cannot order its continued presence in him. This may be due to the relatively beginning stage of mystic life. In the higher stage also, the mystic, who had intensely intuited the vision of God, does not feel joy because of the lack of communion. He will feel that he had been deserted by God because of himself having been a sinner and as such completely unworthy of God's presence. The mystic then struggles hard to get it in vain. He then feels the hollowness of life around him which brought in this separation for him from God. Even this immediate sense of separation "from a Being who yet is felt as in some way present"[152] forms part of his mystic experience. The influence of beautiful, natural scenery and of music and poetry, which arouse emotion, tend to arouse religious emotion as well.[153]

In the ecstatic condition of his realization of God, the mystic experiences an intense communion which "offers a far better solution of the ills of life than philosophy and metaphysics".[154] Ecstasy represents the unitive stage[155] in mysticism "when the soul begins to perceive the odour of the divine perfumes".[156] God does not let the self have His vision continued beyond a limited period and this arouses in the self a sense of disappointment, despair and intense longing

---

152. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 353.
153. ibid. pp. 355–356.
154. *Theory and Art of Mysticism*, p. 156.
155. For other stages, vide *The Religious Consciousness* (a psychological study), p. 394
156. ibid. p. 396.

to have the vision of the deity. "Ecstasy and dryness are episodes which oscillate and give place to each other through long years".[157] Certain features mark this stage of ecstatic joy. The self has its personal consciousness absorbed in the personality of the deity and realizes that he is taken possession by God for ever. Secondly, he has nothing to do, for God does everything through him and as such he has no longer any desire whatsoever to be fulfilled. Thirdly and lastly, there is the feeling of energy and fulness that God is good in looking after himself.[158] The previous experience of the worldly type which the Āḷvārs had before are not helpful in interpreting the vision which God gives them.[159] It is therefore natural for the mystic to wonder at the mysterious presentation. The mystic finds the difficulty in translating his experience with adequate expressions, and so chooses a variety of images to represent by analogy the vision which is too great for his words.

Nammāḷvār describes vividly how the Lord entered into him and occupied in him. He did not know that He was entering within. He came of His own accord and deceived him, that is, He took possession of him who was till then feeling that he was independent by himself and brought him under His control without his consent and awareness. He entered into the body and got united with his self. The Āḷvār declares that he could not leave Him on any account.[160] The Lord Who is pre-eminent among the sentient and non-sentient under Whom all these get their being and sustenance, Who is the Inner Controller of them, Who has demonstrated His easy accessibility in His descent as Kṛṣṇa, Who allows Himself to be enjoyed by the selves and also enjoys them and Who is the consort of Śrī, stood within the Āḷvār and around Him. The Āḷvār has

157. ibid. p. 436.

158. For a detailed treatment of this aspect, vide *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 437-439.

159. Note that Arjuna got dismayed unable to apprehend the cosmic form of God, though he was endowed by the Lord with divine vision. (Vide Bh. G. 11 : 52).

160. T.V.M. 1.7: 7.

here direct experience of the Lord with Śrī.[161] Not merely does the Lord present Himself in the finitised form but the form is synthesised by the Āḻvār with the forms with which He took the descent of Varāha, acquired the name of Keśava, killed the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍā, Who is beyond the knowledge of the gods and Who lies on the deep and vast sea.[162] The Lord is shown here to have come down to him as on other occasions mainly to protect those who are in distress. The Āḻvār was afforded by Him delectable experience of Him, allowing the former to visualise His blue-coloured body and lotus-like eyes.[163] He is identified here through His unique marks like the possession of auspicious attributes having no defect, possession of a divine form, and Garuḍa as His vehicle and being the Spouse of Śrī.[164] The Lord who has His consorts Śrī, Bhūdevi and Nippiṉṉai and who laid Himself on the banyan leaf after devouring all the worlds, occupied his waist[165] and heart.[166] He, who is the body and self of all, far away for some and too near for others, lying beyond the comprehension of even the learned and enlightened and pure and from whom arise doubts and erroneous cognitions, occupied the shoulders of the Āḻvār.[167] The Lord is the source of recollection, knowledge and their removal or disappearance,[168] which means that He is virtually the controller of not only the beings, but also every aspect of their life. It is significant here that the Āḻvār refers to shoulders as having been occupied by Him, perhaps drawing a reference to the knowledge which the Lord gave to the child Dhruva by touching his shoulder with His conch.[169] This may also mean that the Lord occupied the shsoulder of the Āḻvār and He would ride on the shoulders

---

161. ibid. 1.9 : 1. cf. Twenty Four **Thousand on this verse.**
162. ibid. 1.9 : 2.
163. ibid. 1.9 : 3.
164. *Twelve Thousand* on 1.9 : 3.
165. T.V.M. 1.9 : 4.
166. ibid. 1.9 : 5.
167. ibid. 1.9 : 6.
168. Bh. G. 15 : 15.
169. V.P. 1.12 : 51.

of Garuḍa.[170] Then He, who wears the garland of *tuḷaci*, who is peerless and possesses a dazzling form, took His seat in the tongue of the Āḷvār which suggests that He became the subject for the Āḷvār's expressions.[171] The eyes of the saint were then occupied by Him, remaining there with His divine appurtenances in His four arms. He is the controller of both sound and sense of all arts or subjects of study.[172] He dispelled the defects such as imperfect knowledge of the Āḷvār. All the five sense organs were then filled by Him. The forehead of the saint was then occupied by Him.[173] Finally, He took His position on the head of the Āḷvār which is anxiously awaited and yearned for by the devout worshippers of the Lord.[174] This decad has supreme significance in as much as the Āḷvār gets the mystic vision of the Lord's communion with Him and graded occupation of his body limb by limb. The Āḷvār gives an elaborate description of the auspicious form of the Lord with all His divine appurtenances, as He has become one with himself.[175] The experience which the Āḷvār had of God's presence in him emboldens him to state that He would not leave him at any time.[176] He is delectable like nectar at all moments, days, months, years and aeons and His eyes, feet and hands are like the lotuses blossomed just at the moment they are seen.[177] Rather it must be said that the red corals do not bear comparison to His lips, lotuses fall down in point of standard of beauty when compared to His eyes, feet and hands and charming necklaces do not match His tresses, thus proving that these are only apologetic standards of comparison while describing Him.[178] The Lord alone is the source, sustenance and satis-

---

170. Piḷḷāṉ on T.V.M. 1.9 : 6.
171. T.V.M. 1.9 : 7.
172. ibid. 1.9: 8.
173. ibid. 1.9 : 9.
174. ibid. 1.9 : 10.
175. ibid. 2.5.
176. ibid. 2.6 : 7.
177. ibid. 2.5 : 4.
178. ibid. 2.5 : 5.

faction of life *(dhāraka, pōṣaka* and *bhōgya)* – "*Uṇṇum cōṟu parukum nīr tiṉṉum veṟṟilaiyum ellām Kaṇṇaṉ*".[179] The sooner he hears the name 'Nārāyaṇa' the quicker are his eyes welled up in tears.[280] "At the very utterance of the name of the Lord" says Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, "tears well up in my eyes. I am very much moved. I will not befriend anyone else than the Lord".[181]

The Lord came to Nammāḷvār of His own accord and filled his heart fully.[182] This mystic union aroused in the saint a sense of relatedness to God with the result that he feels very much for the Lord being alone as it were. The Lord does not have any servant for service. He has to bear the conch and discus Himself, as also the sword and the bow. There is no follower for Him. No one is offering worship to Him with hands losing himself to the beauty of His feet and shoulders.[183] He entered into the Āḷvār in the form of having devoured the worlds and remained there as a lamp of knowledge. He remained there without looking to any of the sides.[184] The Āḷvār had the direct experience of Kṛṣṇa and then composed the particular verses in praise of Him.[185] When the Āḷvār bowed the Lord at His feet as He lifted the foot to measure the higher regions, His eyes looked like a charming lotus-tank with the slightly slanting stalk.[186] His eyes which were set on him, did not leave him.[187]

The intensity of the direct experience fills the Āḷvārs with remorse. They feel for not having had the vision earlier at times when they simply wasted their time. The Lord is

---

179. ibid. 6.7 : 1.
180. ibid. 1.10 : 8.
181. Peri. Tm. 7.2 : 1.
182. T.V.M. 10.8 : 1.
183. ibid. 8.3 : 3.
184. ibid. 2.6 : 2.
185. ibid. 9.4 : 8, 9. cf. ibid. 10.6 : 4; 10.7 : 5.
186. T.V.R. 42; cf. ibid. 45.
187. ibid. 63.

lying on His serpent couch. The waves of the sea gently touch and pat His feet as if to make Him sleep. Poykaiyāḷvār saw Him sleep with red eyes and feels that much time had elapsed not in beholding Him.[188] The Lord who ripped open the chest of the demon Hiraṇya with the sharp claws, who rides on Garuḍa, measured the worlds, with His shoulders pervading all the directions and His crown measuring the upper regions. The saint did not have then the occasion to have this vision.[189] The Lord left His place in the ocean and came over to Matura in order to remove the chains with which Kamsa had bound His parents Vāsudēva and Dēvaki. He measured the earth and made it His own denying its ownership to the demons. The gods then offered flowers to His feet and worshipped them. The Āḷvār feels that he did not have an occasion to serve Him then.[190] Śrī Rāma went after the deer which was no other than Mārīca in disguise and killed it. Nammāḷvār gets the direct presentation of the Lord having the beautiful discus in his hand. He did not have then the feeling that the Lord did this and stood before him. He did not extol Him then. He wasted all the time before he got this vision due to lack of wisdom.[191]

When desolation overcomes the Āḷvār at the sight of the world, especially after his mystic experience of the Lord, he often has the feeling that he bears on his shoulders the crushing weight of the faults and the waywardness of the world and sings hymns of self condemnation. Sometimes the picture painted in the very darkest colour is of himself as the very embodiment of all that is immoral. The saint says : "The wretched journey of life in which enemies rejoice and friends are filled with sorrow to see us suffer untold miseries![192] How wretched is life in the world in which sudden death, sufferings, and the grief of agnates and cognates over the dead

188. M.Tv. 16.
189. ibid. 17.
190. ibid. 20.
191. P. Tv. 82.
192. T.V.M. 4.9: 1

body are the order of the day![193] How wretched is life in which elation and arrogance, and the happy company of those near and dear and one's mate are made to leave by the sudden stroke of death![194] As wealth accumulates, men decay and the *tamasic* quality predominates[195]. Birth, disease and death are so common that one wonders whether there could be a hell worse than this world.[196] Ensnared through fear in the torture of the worldly existence, men have their maw for their gospel".[197]

As against *tapas* and control of the five senses and their sublimation, which all form the way to attain His feet, Nammāḷvār speaks in one full hymn of his own slavery to the senses and of his being caught within the net spread over by the five 'lords '.[198] The revulsion of this kind can be seen here and there in many of his hymns. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār is more eloquent in his reference to this kind of revulsion.[199] The classical portrayal of this Āḷvār of the tyranny of *karma* and the tragedy of human sorrows by the analogies of the strom-tossed ship,[200] the dilemma of the ant caught between the two burning ends of the faggot,[201] the pack of jackals on an island enveloped by the rising floods[202] and the men dwelling with cobras in the house[203] is unsurpassed in religious literature.

In other places, Nammāḷvār, and for that matter other Āḷvārs too, exaggerates his faults: "I have not folded my straying senses in, nor have gathered flowers in due time

---

193 ibid. 4.9: 2.
194. ibid. 4.9: 3.
195. ibid. 4.9: 4.
196. ibid. 4.9: 5.
197. ibid. 4.9: 6.
198. ibid. 7.1.
199. Peri. Tm. 6.2.
200. ibid. 11.8: 2.
201. ibid. 11.8: 4.
202. ibid. 11.8: 5.
203. ibid. 11.8: 3.

everyday for worship. My hard and wicked heart overflowing with desire leads sinful me to grope for the Lord's help''[204] He continues in the same strain: "I did not observe any penance; I do not have any subtle knowledge. Even then, as a man without resources, I cannot bear to part from Thee.[205] I belong neither with the Eternals nor with the worldlings. I am neither here nor there in my pursuit of Thee''.[206]

To Nammāḷvār, life appears to be hollow with nothing worthy to attract him. The pathetic nature of life which he comes to take note of when his ecstatic joy came to an abrupt end with the Lord going out of his vision presents a contrast to the enjoyable state in which he was then placed. In spite of his having had several births one after another, the Āḷvār remarks that he had got some encouragement in the present life itself by having the enjoyment of delight. The Lord who rides on Garuḍa destroys the hosts of demons to protect those who suffer. Being thus a father to him also, He shall not have him removed from Him, as it would lead to becoming aware of the hell-like life of the world.[207] "My sins are so powerful, though I am a small one. I place my palms on my head and request You to come to me to remove my distress.[208] When shall I, to whom You had given an enjoyable experience of unlimited bliss, have the occasion to see You with my eyes? I am calling You day and night for help.[209] I do not know how many sins I had committed which could not be brought to an end. I fervently appeal to You with tears.[210] I am a shameless fellow while calling Him for help. Even Brahmā and others are not able to see You.[211] It is too much for me,

204. T.V.M. 4.7: 9.
205, ibid. 5.7: 1.
206. ibid. 5.7: 2
207. T.V.M. 2.6: 8.
208. ibid. 4.7: 1.
209. ibid. 4.7: 2.
210. ibid: 4.7: 3.
211. ibid. 4.7: 4.

the fickle-minded, to have a vision of You.[212] I know well that You are pervading every-where including myself, within the soul and the body. Yet I am stretching forth my tongue within myself to taste Your presence by casting my looks in all directions to behold You. This is a clear proof of my ignorance"[213] The Āḷvār is conscious of having had the direct experience of joy with Him within himself and also of having his nescience removed,[214] but appeals for His immediate presence before him so that he could worship His feet using his arms fully for offering flowers there, sing His praise and dance with delight.[215] All these painful feelings arise because he could not get the vision of the Lord any where. He could desist from these attempts, but he had already a vision of Him who is made known by the light of the *Vedas*. Even though he has been pleading to the Lord. He had not shown any sympathetic consideration for him. The Āḷvār asks the mind whether He is now occupying a place which He had specially chosen as to be beyond the reach for His mercy.[216]

The feeling of separation is depicted with the touch of uniqueness and originality. The mind had gone after Him. The body is, however, placed far away from Him, much as it had committed sins.[217] This is indirectly expressing the Āḷvār's anxiety and longing to be in direct physical communion with the Lord. All the same, his mind could not leave His vicinity nor will his tongue do nothing but praising Him. His body feels the thrill.[218] The Āḷvār offers then a different kind of appeal to the Lord. "People who are placed in a superior position are found to help the people in the lower stratum of society who suffer and appeal to them for relief and they do this sometimes even by undergoing personal suffering. When I make this appeal to You, You are not to

212. ibid: 4.7: 5.
213. ibid. 4.7: 6.
214. ibid. 4.7: 7.
215. ibid. 4.7: 8.
216. P. Tv. 74.
217. ibid. 7.
218. T.V.M. 1.6? 3; cf. T.K, 1.

suffer in any way. Please accept my appeal and show Yourself to my vision".[219]

Nammāḷvār pleads passionately to the Lord and asks whether he would get at least to the sacred shrine at Tirunāvāy which would remove the obstacles that lie in the path of God-realization.[220] He is keen on serving the Lord[221] and enjoy His bliss.[222] He requests the Lord to appear before him at least for a day with the discus and the conch.[223] Reminded by the act of measuring the world, he asks the Lord to show him His beautiful gait.[224] In spite of having been for a very long period related to the Lord and Śri, he is now separated from Him.[225] He requests the Lord to present Himself before him at least for a day with the sight of being served by Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other gods.[226] The Lord in His five forms hides Himself from him.[227] The Āḷvār does not know how long he would be required to wander about in order to have Him in his vision as Tirivikrama.[228] As an Inner Soul of all, He is requested to show His compassion to his ignorant self.[229] He does not know why the Lord should make him suffer more and more by subjecting him to sensual attraction upsetting his mental equipoise.[230] Even the never-ending, ever-unchanging and unlimited joy of *kaivalya* does not bear any comparison to the act of service at His feet, even if it should last for a short duration.[231]

---

219 P. Tv. 13.
220. T.V.M. 9.8: 1-3.
221. ibid. 9.8: 4.
222. ibid. 9.8: 5.
223. ibid. 6.9: 1.
224. ibid. 6.9: 2.
225: ibid. 6.9: 3.
226. ibid. 6.9: 4.
227. ibid. 6.9: 5.
228. ibid. 6.9: 6.
229. ibid. 6.9: 7.
230. ibid. 6.9: 8.
231. ibid. 6.9: 10.

In a mood of abject dejection, the Āḷvār speaks of not having done any good act, not having refrained from doing sinful deeds and was far away from the Lord owing to his indulgence in matters of little significance. The Lord is, however, capable of creating wonders and so is requested to take him to His feet.[232] The behaviour of the world is really wonderful. Some people get their daily bread by terrorising others and forcing them by torture to commit sinful deeds. The Āḷvār cannot live in such a world any longer and therefore requests the Lord to take him whom He had already admitted as His servant.[233] Again, the five senses are so powerful that they afflict even the Eternals if they were to come down to this mortal world and stay for sometime. One can easily imagine how powerfully they would subjugate an ordinary being. The Āḷvār tells the Lord that if He were to let him down, then his position at the hands of these senses would be very pitiable. He requests the Lord to come and give him a word of encouragement.[234] The Lord has control over the Āḷvār and the seven worlds. He is Himself the deities whom He had ordained to carry out His injunctions. He is everything in the world, remaining on occasions in a subtle form as causes and not visible to the senses. How can then the Āḷvār get at Him?[235]

It should be taken for granted that Nammāḷvār sings in this strain only in moments of despair when he feels for the world or when he thinks that he is away from God or godly life. This represents only the value he sets on ethical codes. As the saint has undergone the purgation, he is the purest soul, the very embodiment of morality. The Āḷvār himself gives expression to his conviction: "The Lord dispelled my two *karmas* and He has taken me to His fold";[236] "I have worn His feet on my head".[237] He continues: "The Lord who cannot be apprehended by the *Vedas* or by those who are

232. ibid. 3.2: 6.
233. ibid. 4.9: 6.
234. ibid. 7.1 : 6.
235. ibid. 8.1 : 6.
236. ibid. 10.4: 2.
237. ibid. 10.4: 3.

well-versed in them has been depended upon by me as the medicine to cure all ills".[238] "I shall tirelessly utter the name of, embrace and bow my head to, the Lotus Feet which measured the three world".[239] "I extolled the golden feet of my Lord sought and worshipped by the Eternals with my compositions".[240] "When Thou hast been the theme of my hymns" says the Āḷvār in another context, "I would never address to another those sweet words that emanate from my tongue".[241] Can we not take our Āḷvār to be one who always sings exclusively the Lord – in the language of Saivite saint Cuntaramūrtti, a '*Paramaṉaiyē pāṭuvār*'?

When the devotee cries out for having God's presence, God certainly listens to His appeal and presents Himself before him. The Āḷvār was struggling hard to live without God and was about to get drowned like a boat in the sea of worldly existence; the Lord came and joined him with a divine form bearing the conch and the discus. The Āḷvār remarks that the Lord felt compassionate towards him crying 'ah, ah' thereby revealing that He could not any longer bear the torments of His devotee, the Āḷvār.[242] The Lord stood in his heart casting a favourable look at him.[243] He got united with the saint destroying completely the power of the senses and stood always looking at him.[244] The Āḷvār could not visualize anything except Him with red lips, the white teeth and shining ear-ornaments. The lustre of each of His limbs vies with that of the other. He is remaining in the mind of the Āḷvār displaying a smile in His red lips.[245] The Lord will show His sympathy to those whom He likes to receive it without expecting anything from them. He stays on in the mind of a small person like the Āḷvār.[246]

238. ibid. 9.3: 3.
239. ibid. 1.3 : 10.
240. P.Tv. 45.
241. T.V.M. 3.9 : 1.
242. ibid. 5.1: 9; cf. Peri. Tm. 7.6 : 2; 7.7 : 9.
243. ibid. 8.7 : 1.
244. ibid. 8.7 : 2.
245. ibid. 8.7 : 7.
246. ibid. 8.7 : 8.

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār uttered the names of God who is the Self of all and stays in the shrine at Śrī Raṅgam. Though these holy names were uttered by the impure and filthy-bodied being with the sullied mouth, the blue-coloured Lord appeared within his eyes offering shelter for him [247] The effect of the sight of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam dispelled all the sins which are irremediable and which give rise to diseases.[248]

Nammāḷvār had a rich and enjoyable experience, at the shrine Tiruviṇṇakar, with the Lord whose prospereous states include all the mutually contradictory factors known to man such as poverty and riches, hell and heaven, hatred and enmity, poison and nectar, pleasure and pain, confusion and clarity, punishment and favour, heat and shade, town and country, knowledge and nescience, light and darkness, earth and sky, merit and sin, union and separation, memory and forgetfulness, existence and non-existence, crookedness and straightforwardness, black and white, truth and falsehood, youthfulness and old age, rejuvenation and decreptitude, the three worlds and the *Paramapada*, likes and dislikes, prosperity and adversity, fame and infamy.[249] He has a body which is not the product of the matter and also a body in the form of the dirty world. He is concealed and explicit.[250] He is the refuge for the gods and the lord of Death for the demons. He keeps the world well protected under the shade of His feet and does not protect those who depend on others.[251] He is the shade and sunshine, microcosmic and macrocosmic, short and long, and moveable and immoveable.[252]

From the point of view of ordinary knowledge the insoluble philosophical problems relating to the Absolute lead to series of contradictions as these mentioned by Nammāḷvār. These contradictions proclaim with a loud note that He can-

247. T.K. 12.
248. ibid. 13.
249. T.V.M. 6.3 : 1 to 6.
250. ibid. 6.3 : 7.
251. ibid. 6.3 : 8.
252. ibid. 6.3 : 10.

not be understood by man - "*aṟivu ariya pirān*".[253] He is the End, the Beginning and the Beginning of the Beginning [254] He is the ancient Lord without end.[255] He is the Principal behind root and seed.[256] He is the true cause in its entirety and the overlord of everything, the sole Original and the Primal seed of all things: "*mūvāt taṉimutal*",[257] "*taṉi vittu*"[258], "*muḻu mutal*"[259] etc. All these do not satisfy the dialectical arguments. Again, contradictions like these show that the Absolute presents a philosophical problem, as the *Upaniṣads*[260] do, which baffles the metaphysicians. These features present themselves to the mystic Āḻvār as part of the *vibhūti* of Nārāyana and so does not require any proof to reconcile them. They are irreconcilable and remain as such for the immature mind whose vision is limited to the comprehension only of the parts or those features and not as related or integrated into one composite whole.

Ecstasy, which falls to the lot of the fortunate few, lies indescribable, for want of adequate expressions, but the person who had the experience of it cannot but give expression to it. He could use only such words and expressions with which he is familiar to describe his experience, but these are poor and inadequate aids. The Lord is described and addressed with those expressions. He is delectable and so is insatiable nectar which by its superworldly nature could be the nearest equivalent to describe Him. He is enjoyable and so is the perfect note played on the *viṇa*. It is these objects that serve as fit for presenting a likeness to Him under His various aspects. Thus metaphors and similies play a dominant role in such descriptions. Attractiveness of the Lord's appearance is an important aspect in the depiction of the

253. ibid. 5.5 : 11.
254. Peri. Tm. 9.7 : 1.
255. T.V.M. 1.3 : 5.
256. ibid. 2.8 : 10.
257. ibid. 2.8 : 5.
258. ibid. 1.5 : 3; T.V.C. 4.
259. ibid. 1.7 : 8.
260. cf. Sv. Up. 3 : 19; T.V.M. 1.3 : 4, 7.

Lord. From this point of view the Lord is the most beautiful blue-diomond (*ōr eḷil nīlamaṇi*),[261] and the purest (*amalaṉ*)[262] and the faultless (*ninmalan*).[263] Periyāḷvār calls Him '*Alakan*'[264] and '*Maṇavāḷaṉ*'.[265] Nammāḷvār refers to Him as '*Aḷakar*'[266] and he revels in the ocean-hued or cloud-hued colour of the Lord and in many places he calls Him 'the Dark gem' (*karumāṇikkam*) [267] He addresses Him as '*parañcōṭi*'[268] (or the supreme shining self); to him He is *Bhuvana Sundara* without any shade of ugliness. Aesthetics as art criticism applies the criteria of immanence and transcendence, and elevates the science and art of aesthetics into a philosophy as the critique of the creative impulse. It is the intuitive expression of infinite beauty through the medium of the finite, and it portrays the beauties of nature and the embodied self as partial revelations of the obsolute beauty of God. Nammāḷvār expresses the beauty of the Lord: "My Lord! Has the effulgence of Thy face turned in itself into the effulgence of Thy crown? Has the splendour of Thy feet become the splendour of Thy foot-rest? Has the brightness of Thy waist spread itself into Thy ornaments and garments?"[269]

The most intimate experience of the Lord's bliss is often spoken of as '*amutu*' (the nectar).[270] The commentators of *Nālāyiram* bring out the greatness of this conception of '*ārāvamutu*' which is according to them unique in their mystic language.[271] Says the Āḷvār "He and I became one

---

261, A.P. 10.

262. ibid. 1.

263. ibid. 1.

264. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.3: 5.

265. ibid. 4.9: 4,

266. T.V.M, 2.10: 2.

267. ibid. 3.3: 3; 5.1: 5: 5.10: 7; 8.9: 1; Kulacēkarāḷvār refers to Him as Karumaṇi (Perum. Tm. 1.1).

268. ibid. 3.1: 2. cf. Muṇ. Up. 2.2: 9 and 10.

269. ibid. 3.1: 1.

270. ibid. 1.6: 6; 2.3: 7; 2.5: 5; 2.7: 11; 3.3: 5: 3.4: 5; 3.5: 6; 3.6: 7; 3.8: 7; 3.10: 3: 4.9: 6; 5.5: 9: 5.8: 1: 5.9: 5; 6.3: 1; 6.10: 3; 7.1: 1; 7.2: 5; 8.1: 1; 8.4: 2' 8.8: 4; 9.2: 10; 10.7: 2; 10.8: 6; 10.10: 5.

271. *Īṭṭin Tamiḷākkam* Vol. V. 5.8: 1 (Commentary).

with me (Him ?) as honey, milk, ghee, sugar-cane juice and nectar, all being mixed".[272] The idea conveyed is that, whilst sense enjoyment is exciting and exhausting, the joy of Divine contact expresses the inexpressible joy which is satisfaction without satiation. Almost all the Āḷvārs refer to the Lord by this term. The hymn on the deity at Kumbakōṇam beginning with "*ārāamutē*' is unique in its experience. Our Āḷvār refers to the Lord as '*amutu*' with so many prefixes and suffixes with that word : "*kaṭal-pāṭa amutē*"[273] - 'the nectar which has no connection with the salt sea'; "*ārā amutam*"[274] - 'insatiable nector'; '*vetattu āmutam*"[275] - 'the nectar of the *Vedas*'; "*nalam-kaṭal amutam*"[276] - 'the nector of the milky ocean'; "*iṉṉa-mutu*"[277] - 'sweet nectar'; "*eṇṇam puguntu tittikkum amutē*"[278] - 'the nectar which enters the mind and is sweet there' etc. The Lord is the sweetest experience to the devotee and for want of apt words the Āḷvār speaks of Him as "*tēṉ*" (honey), *pāl* (milk), *ney* (ghee), *kaṉṉal* (sugar-cane juice)".[279] Again he refers to Him as "*karumpiṉ iṉ cāṟu*, (the sweet juice of the sugar-cane), *kaṭṭi* (sugar-candy)"[280] and "*kaṉi*" (fruit).[281] To Periyāḷvār the Lord is '*nālvētak-kaṭalamutu*' (the nectar of the seas of the four *Vedas*)[282]. These several metaphorical experessions used by our saint are all too sweet by them-selves.

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār could not contain himself while having the direct vision of the Lord at Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkai. The Lord is like a bull which is uncontrollable. He is a man in being independent of others and is a woman by His depend-

---

272. ibid. 2.3; 1.
273. ibid. 2.3: 5.
274 ibid. 2.5: 4.
275. ibid. 3.3: 5.
276. ibid. 3.4: 5.
277. ibid. 3.6: 7; 5.1: 2; 5.9: 5.
278. ibid. 6.10: 3.
279. ibid. 2.3: 1: 5.1: 2; 5.5: 9.
280. ibid. 3.5: 6; 3.10: 3.
281. ibid. 3.10: 3.
282. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.3: 11.

ence or sub-servience to His devotees. He is a necklace of pearls and a heap of pearls. He is a bud and full-blown flower. He is a sugar-cane of sweet taste having been grown watered by nectar. He is the sweet fruit,[283] the sugar-candy and the juice of the sugar-cane.[284] He is treasure, gold and gem.[285] He is air and water.[286] He is music, musical melody, lustrous light, and mountain.[287] He is pearl and lustrous green emerald.[288]

To Nammāḷvār He is the fresh-drawn milk, ghee and sweet taste of ghee, nectar, taste of nectar, and the joy of having tasted it.[289] He is nectar and honey.[290] He is a pillar of corals, because of the support He affords to people to rely on and because it cannot be taken to parts. He is the sweet sugar-cane grown in the hearts of the devotees. He is a golden hill, perhaps because a hill rises above many mounds all round and its golden nature shows its charming hue, stiffness and high value. The Lord is the highest and unchangingly charming unlike the host of gods. He is the divine wish-yielding tree (*karpakam*), thus a boon to the devotees.[291] He is the young elephant in the groves of Tiruvintaḷūr.[292] The happiness of the Āḷvār is greater when he says that the Lord is the sweet nectar to his soul and transcendent light intermixed with his life. He is the sweet fruit experienced by the seers and *ṛṣis*.[293] "One cannot adequately describe", says Periyāḷvār, "the greatness of those who, at the point of death, chant the several names of the Lord, instead of calling upon

283. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 1.
284. ibid. 7.10: 2.
285. ibid. 7.10: 3.
286. ibid. 7.10: 4.
287. ibid. 7.10: 9.
288. T.K. 10.
289. T.V.M. 8.1: 7; cf. T.K. 5.
290. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 3; cf. ibid. 7.3: 5.
291. ibid. 2.5: 1.
292. ibid. 4 9: 2.
293. T.V.M. 3.6: 7.

one's kith and kin."[294] Again the Āḻvār says that he had filled his body with the bliss of the Lord as if a vessel is being filled with the nectar by churning the sea.[295] "As a return for the great, good help", says Nammāḻvār, "of communion in my soul, I have given up to Thee my soul itself".[296] The Lord has incorporated Himself with the Āḻvār, life into life, by fascinating his heart and entering it through His generosity and made it tender.[297] "The Lord has merged into me" says the saint, "having absorbed into Himself my life and heart, filling these with Himself, without the knowledge even of His consort and associates".[298]

Nammāḻvār describes Bhagavān̲ as the very embodiment of moral grandeur. The Lord not only loves morality in His followers but He Himself is pure, holy and moral. He helps His followers, the devotees, to become moral and pure. He is the Truth-"*Meyyan̲*".[299] He is the Pure - "*pun̲itan̲*";[300] the Holy - "*tīrttan̲*".[301] In other places He is described as "*tūyāy*",[302] "*tūmoḻiyāy*,[303] "*tūyan̲*"[304] all giving the same sense that Bhagavān̲ is the pure One. The Lord is the Holy of holies destroying sin - "*pavitran̲*",[305] "*pāvanācan*";[306] He is the very form of Virtue - "*puṇṇiyan*".[307] In Tirumāliruñcōlai hymn He is described as "*Aḻakar*".[308] His incom-

---

294. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.5: 1.
295. ibid. 5.4: 4.
296. T.V M. 2.3: 4.
297. ibid. 9.6: 3.
298. ibid. 10.7: 1.
299. T.V.M. 9.10: 7 cf. A.P. 7.
300. Peri. Tm. 7.1: 4.
301. T.V.M. 2.8: 6; 7.2: 7.
302. Peri. Tm. 7.1: 9.
303. Peri. Tm. 6.2: 9.
304. T.V.M. 1.9: 6.
305. ibid. 2.3: 7, 9.
306. ibid. 3.6: 2.
307. Peri. Tm. 6.1: 8.
308. T.V.M. 2 10: 2.

parable beautiful form is brought out in another hymn.[309] The Beautiful Absolute, *Bhuvana Sundara*, can only be the Purest. The aesthetic philosophy of the Āḷvars transforms the Brahman of metaphysics and the Īśvara of Ethics into the *Bhuvana Sundara* of *Bhagavata*. The absolute of metaphysics becomes the beautiful God of aesthetic religion. He is "*naṉṟu eḻil nāraṇaṉ*".[310] Sometimes the Lord is described metaphorically as "*Tūya amutu*"[311] – 'the pure nectar' and as "*Oṇ cuṭār kaṟṟai*"[312] – 'the Resplendent Bundle of Rays'.

The idea described above is also expressed in a negative way. He is "*amalaṉ*"[313] – 'the taintless One', "*niṉamalaṉ*"[314] – the 'faultless One. Negative metaphors are also employed to describe Him. The Lord is "*ūṉamil celvam*"[315] – 'the wealth devoid of any deficiency;' "*antamil pukaḻāy*"[316] – 'the One with endless glory'; "*ēttu arum kīrttiyiṉāy*"[317] – 'the One with praiseless glory'; "*iṭum eṭuppum il īcan*"[318] – the Lord without equal or superior'; "*tōṟṟam kēṭu avai illavaṉ*"[319] – 'the One who is neither created nor destroyed; "*kēṭu il viluppukal kēcavan*"[320] – 'Kēcava with imperishable, great glory'; "*ellai il jñānattaṉ*"[321] – 'the One with endless knowledge'; "*taṉṉai oppār il appaṉ*"[322] – 'the One without any equal to Him; "*kōṭu il pukalk kaṇṇaṉ*"[323] – 'Kṛṣṇa wiih faultless [glory';

309. ibid. 3.1.
310. ibid. 1.3 : 7.
311. ibid. 1.7 : 3.
312. ibid. 1.7 : 4.
313. ibid. 3.4 : 4; cf. A.P.1.
314. A.P. 1.
315. T.V.M. 3.4 : 7.
316. ibid. 5.7: 7
317. ibid. 7.6: 3.
318. ibid. 1.6: 3,
319. ibid. 3.6: 6.
320. ibid. 3.10: 11
321. ibid. 3.10: 8.
322. ibid. 6.3: 9.
323. ibid. 8.2: 11.

"*ulappu ilān*"[324] – 'the One with endless auspicious qualities; and "*pirappili*"[325] 'the One without birth'. He is also referred to as "*pirappu il palpiravip perumāṉ*"[326] – 'the One without birth, but taking countless births'. This means that He is beyond birth which is not conditioned by *karma*, but his births are self-determined and self-evolved.

The Lord is full of those rare and auspicious attributes and there is no comparison to Him in this respect. He is therefore called "*viripukalaṉ*"[327] – 'the One with extensive and vast glory'. He is without birth which is the basis for all defects. He is "*uttamaṉ*"[328] – 'the Supreme Being' who is possessed of all moral attributes. Because of His infinite attributes, He has a thousand names – "*pērum ōr āyiram pira pala uṭaiya emperumāṉ*"[329] - 'the One with a thousand names along with many others, being our Lord'; "*nāmaṅkaḷ āyiram uṭaiya namperumāṉ*"[330]- 'our Lord possessed of a thousand names'. Among these qualities knowledge, strength, lordship, valour, energy and splendour – these six are associated with His nature as the Supreme Being, the other qualities like goodness, spontaneous love etc,, making Him easily accessible to us. These qualities have an eternal appeal to the humanity. So *Brahmānubhava* differs with different seekers of salvation and this brings out the uniqueness of each experience and its universality. The seeker after salvation meditates on some single quality of the Lord according to his or her inclination and even the eternal seers, it is said, enjoy only one aspect of the divine nature. Even though the methods and the starting points may vary with the psychological variations of the individual, the goal is the same, namely, the intuition of Bhagavāṉ, which is of the nature of supreme unsurpassable Bliss.

324. ibid. 5.8: 4.
325. ibid. 3.5: 6.
326. ibid. 2.9: 5.
327. ibid. 4.8: 8.
328. T.P. 3.
329. T.V.M. 1.3: 4.
330. ibid. 5.9: 11.

Has not Nammāḷvār said that "He is all knowledge and bliss?"[331]

The intensity of God-love of Nammāḷvār or rather his God-infatuation can be seen in all his four compositions. His is not mere emotion, divorced from intellect. It is an emotion born out of *jñāna*. That is why it is called *'mati-nalam'*[332] in the phraseology of the Āḷvār. Mere *jñāna* leads to dissection and vivisection of God and God-concepts, and can be of little or no help to the pursuers after it. Similarly mere faith and fervour border on sensuousness and sentimentalism, and are apt to drown the seeker into vice and sin and borne out by many an instance in daily life. A happy blend of *jñāna* and *bhakti* is what is most beneficent to the human soul dissatisfied with worldly pursuits. *Jñāna* must ripen into *bhakti*, "*Jñāṉam kaṉinta nalam*"[333] as Amutaṉar terms it. Knowledge divides, but love unites. Nammāḷvār has exemplified by his life and works the glory that a man can achieve by a happy blend of knowledge and love. Love towards God fulfils itself in the case of the Āḷvār in love towards the entire creation which is organically one with God, all beings and things being but His body (*Sarīra-sarīri bhāva*). And that is why Nammāḷvār is sought after by man as much as God Himself, Who, after a long long search, found a person who could say 'All is Vāsudeva' - "*Ellām Kaṇṇaṉ*".[334]

---

331. ibid. 1.1:2.
332. ibid. 1.1:1.
333. R.N. 66.
334. T:V.M. 6,7: 1; cf. Bh.G. 7: 19.

NATURE MYSTICISM

Every experience is a matter of subject-object relationship in which the subject is usually generalized as the spirit or soul while the object is spoken of as Nature or Universe or more generaly as *Prakṛti*. The basis of soul and Nature is God or the absolute which is described under various names such as Brahman, Nārāyaṇa, Śiva and so on in the various systems of philosophy. Mysticism is the way in which man experiences union with God and attains immortal bliss. It is a philosophy of religion as it is both a view and way of life. It describes the spiritual quest of man for God and justifies this spiritual experience by a philosophy or theoretical explanation. It is a personal spiritual approach to God as the God of love. In spite of differences due to environment, endowment, organisation and other factors the mystics of all lands experience God in and through Nature. They postulate what they call the self-evident truth that mystic experience is knowable. They maintain that the gulf between the sensible and the super-sensible can be bridged. To them what is here is 'yonder' and what is 'yonder' is here. The two are alike and the like can know the like. God is a Supreme Reality that is realisable according to them.

Though the philosophy of nature or *prakṛti* is not so important as that of the spirit or *ātman* it furnishes a corrective to the subjective tendencies of mysticism as a personal intuitive experience. It is a matter of common knowledge that science studies in a disinterested way a particular province of reality and has a piecemeal view thereof. But philosophy reflects on nature as a connected whole; and , as the cosmology of religion, it enquires into the nature of God as the ground of all beings. Nature is the world of space-time-cause and it is governed by the law of uniformity and unity. God

is in nature, but is not nature. Nature is external to the finite self, but not to God. Nature and the self are eternal but neither is derived from the other nor created by it. Though they are eternally distinct, they are not external to God who is their ground and mystic goal.

Creation is the self-limitation of God in the interests of soul-making. Nature is the theatre of the Divine *līlā* of Love and the Lord wears the garment of nature and plays with the finite self till the two are united. The flowery garment of the world as revealed in the shining sun and the moon, the fragrance of the lotus and lily and the sweet song of the cuckoo and the koel is for some mystics a medium of ineffable perception, a source of exalted joy, the veritable clothing of God. It serves as a fine medium for the self to reach out to the Absolute. The mysterious vitality of trees, the silent magic of the forest, the strange and steady cycle of its life, possess in a peculiar degree this power of unleashing the human soul. Unsullied by the corroding touch of consciousness, that life can make a contact with the "great life of the All", and through its mighty rhythms man can receive a message concerning the true and timeless world of "all that is, and was, and evermore shall be". The poet, the artist and the mystic gifted with 'the vision and the faculty divine' intuit their spiritual kinship with the soul of Nature and are lost in blissful communion with its glowing beauty and rhythm.

According to Nammāḻvār, God is the subject and the object: "He is my Lord, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, the Master of the Eternals, who as the sole, independent Form constituted the Primordial Seed, created by the mere wish, Brahmā, Siva, Indra and other deities, the great seers, the sentient beings, men and animals, and non-sentient beings, and created the great mystic ocean (sea of Āvaraṇa) and is asleep on it";[1] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's perception of nature itself as God is something grand: "Clothed with the garment of the waters

1. T.V.M. 1.5: 4.

of the ocean, with the wide earth for His feet, with the wide expanse of the space for His body, the eight fair directions for His shoulders, and the zenith of the macrocosm (*aṇḍam*) for His crown, He stands".[2] The Lord is gloriously depicted by Nammāḻvār as a hill of emerald, wearing the ruddy huge cloud and bearing on the head the red brilliant-rayed sun. The cool-rayed moon is His ornament adorning the neck called significantly as '*candrahāra*'. The multitude of twinkling stars are His lustrous ornaments. The yellow garment, crest-gem and the *candrahāra* are thus represented by these three presentations of Nature. The Lord is imagined by the Āḻvār to be lying on the arm of the God of the sea.[3] The vision of the mystic poets is more or less akin to that of Arjuna who beheld the Universal Form of the Lord with the aid of the supernatural eye bestowed by Him.[4] These mystics necessarily have recourse to metaphors, allegories and parables when they begin to express and explain their inexpressible experience and naturally their language becomes poetic. The saints of *Nālāyiram* have had such experiences which have found expression in their exquisite poetry.

God is held to be the inner controller (*antaryāmin*) of the selves and of the inanimate world. This form which God takes is one of the five finitised forms. Though this is to be admitted, it is not so easy, as it appears to be, to prove it in the case of the inanimate world. He is to be shown to remain within the world whose another name is Nature and this becomes a possibility by recognising God's full pervasion of Nature. He is not only *beyond* Nature but is *in* Nature. The soul-essence is rooted or grounded in the super-essence of God and is sustained by His love. God is closer to us than our own breath and nearer than our hands and feet. God's centre is every where and circumference nowhere. He dwells in the stone below and the star above and is eternal in the

2. Peri. Tm. 6.6: 3; cf. M.Tv. 17, and the invocatory verses of *Naṟṟiṇai*; again cf. Mū. Tv. 41. Here the Āḻvār speaks of God having the lightning as his garment.
3. T V,C. 1.
4. Bh. G. 11: 5 to 8.

temporal. The Lord says: "Cleave the wood and there I am". The immortal Tamil poet Kampaṉ says : "Know thou that the Lord is present alive in the smallest unit of length and in the hundredth part of an atom; in the great Mēru mountain and in the pillar standing here, and in the words spoken by thee too".[5] Prahlāda's intuition of the *Paramātman* in the pillar[6] and Yaśoda's cosmic vision of Kṛṣṇa[7] are classic examples to illustrate divine immanance in inanimate as well as human nature. William Blake is only echoing the mystic notion of Boheme who speaks of our seeing a flower to whom the world is but a mirror of the Deity where the soul can hold a converse with Him therein and even, according to whom, a flower in the wall will reveal God in all His glory like the lilies and the starry heavens. Tennyson when he sees a flower experiences the same truth. He sees the unity of the universe in the flower.[8]

Similarly, Nature mysticism inspires the devotee who experiences and enjoys the beauty of God objectively in all things and at the end he realizes the mystery of this Absolute beauty remaining already enthroned in the heart as the Lord of Love. Tagore had a vision of the world bathed in the radiance of beauty which, according to him, looks Heaven and Earth when the song of the singer was not distinct from Him Who was *Rasa* itself in the drama of love and spiritual wedding.[9] The immortal poet Kampaṉ describes the unfailing rains, feeding the perennial river the Gaṅga made holy and sacred in the minds of the people by legends and literature. The rains and the floods remind him of the divine legends.

---

5. K.R. *Yutta*. *Iraṇiva*, 124.
6. T.V.M. 2.8: 9.
7. Periyāḷ. Tm. 2.3: 6.
8. "Flower in the crannied wall
   I pluck you out the crannies
   Hold you here, root and all in my hand
   Little flower, but if I could understand
   What you are, root and all and all in all,
   I should know what God and man is"
9. Vide B G. Ray : *The Philosophy of Tagore.*

Like God, they take the form of many things, sometimes reminding us even of the prostitute. He does not leave us in doubt; for he tells us that, like God appearing in many forms according to the beliefs of various sects and religions, water takes many different forms of channels and reservoirs according to the shape men give it.[10] Cosmic consciousness, as pointed out by Bucke, is the consciousness of the Cosmos in its entirety; but it is not a mere addition or summation of all things of the world. Cosmos is the eternal expression of the dynamic love of the Almighty while creation is the process of the Formless God revealing to us in varied forms.[11] The one becomes many out of love according to an *Upaniṣadic* statement. This is to help the soul thrown into space and time, as it were, to unveil itself and intuit its true divine nature, to kiss it away unto divinity. Before creation, *prakṛti* was in a latent state; but in creation the latent becomes the patent and *manas*, *prāṇa* and the elements gradually evolve from it. The self is different from *prakṛti* and is eternal. It is somehow associated with the body made of *prakṛti* which is subjected to the ills of mundane life. But it can release itself from the perishing body and attain immortality by the redemptive grace of the Saviour Who is the Soul of souls. The sense of separateness is dissolved when the soul feels ensouled by His grace and greeted by His Love. Then it realizes that spirituality has its meaning and value in Divinity and not in mere Nature Mysticism

Higher mysticism is the communion between the self of the man and the In-dwelling Self, and Nature mysticism is a half-way house to it and not the goal or the final stopping place. Even the ancient Caṅkam poetry of the Tamils has in general no touch of divinity in it even though Nature comes

10. K.R. Pāla, 619.
11. cf. K.R. Cuntara. (invocatory verse).

there as the background and stage for the drama of human life, '*uri-p-porul*' as it is called. The Caṅkam poetry abounds in description of Nature which colours the human life in many ways. For example, the droning noise of the sea appears like the mourning cry very much to the desperate heroine separated from her lover.[12] The sea seems to mourn in sympathy with her. Sometimes a jarring note is heard; an opposition or disregard is felt. The same heroine sometimes feels that the sea which goes on with its dance of waves remains cruelly unconcerned about her own sufferings.[13] All these moods are too well known in any poetry to need emphasis. Description of Nature, as in any high poetry, stands as a symbol to reveal to us the inner meaning of the story, the ebb and flow of emotions, as seen by the poet in his vision. Nature plays another important role, especially in ancient Tamil poetry, as giving room for the free play of allegory (*ulḷuṟai uvamam*) and suggestion (*iṟaicci*). There Nature helps the poets to wield their satirical remarks, biting or sweet, with hidden meaning to achieve the concentration and economy they aim at. Such descriptions of Nature are seen in the hymns of Āḻvārs who achieve their purpose by this aspect.

The universal love of Nammāḻvār and other Āḻvārs may be better understood by our realization of the wide scope of their poetic interest with vision of Beauty every where. A list of the *fauna* and *flora* of their poetry may help us here. One may note in their poetry various kinds of bamboos, the sugar-cane, various kinds of paddy and grains, the cocoanut, the arecanut, the palmyra and varieties of the plantains being often found mentioned. The sandal, the mango, the *veṅkai*, the *kōṅku*, the *puṉṉai*, the *ñāḻal*, various kinds of jack tree, the *vākai*, the *nelli* (āmlakam), the *cura-puṉṉai*, the *kuravam*, the *acōku*, the *aloe*, and others are referred to. *Miḷaku* and *kaṟi* (pepper varieties), turmeric, are their favourites. Some of these are food like paddy; others like

12. K.L.T. 129.
13. ibid. 123.

sandal, *akil* etc., are famous for their fragrance; still others like the jack, the mango, the plantain etc., are noted for their fruits; a few others like the *vēṅkai*, the *kuravam* etc., for their flowers and fewer still like pepper for their spices.

The Āḷvār poets are generally fond of flowers. They refer to the blooming *kōṅku*, *vēṅkai*, *puṉṉai*, *kuravu*, *makiḻ (vakulam)*, *kuruntam*, *cerunti*, *mallikai*, *mauval*, and *mullai* (jasmine varieties), *mātavi*, *kurukkatti*, *ceṇpakam*, *piṭavam*, *karuviḷai*, *pūvai*, *iruvātci*, *pātiri*, *karumukai*, varieties of the sword flower (*tālai* and *kaitai*), *mantāram* (*pārijātam*) and *kuriñci*, The beautiful water flowers of all varieties and descriptions whose distinctions the later generations have forgotten occupy in the Āḷvārs the unique position of beauty – *kaḷunīr*. *ceṇkaḷunīr*, *kāvi*, *karuṅkuvaḷai*, *ceṅkuvaḷai*, *karunilam*, *nīlam*, *kumutam*, *allī* (*āmpal*), *kamalam*, *aravintam*, *paṅkayam*, *muṇṭakam* and *tāmarai* (lotus varieties).

The floods of Kāviri, Maṇṇi and Gaṅga rush down carrying in their floods many precious things like fruits, fragrant wood, yak tails, (*veṇcāmarai*) elephant tusks, precious gems, pearls, coral and gold, conches and fish and thereby enriching the country. Triumaṅkaiyāḷvār mentions even the clothings of nymphs being carried by the waters of the Gaṅga.[14]

Mention is made of the birds of all varieties by these saints. The koel (cuckoo), the peacock, the dove, the parrot, the *anril*, the *cempōttu*, the *pūvai* (*nākaṇavāyp-puḷ*), and even the wild cock, the crow and the eagle are the favourite birds of the poet-saints. The water birds like *kuruku*, *nārai*, *kokku* and *aṉṉam* have beauty of their own and the saints refer to them in many contexts. The dancing of the peacock rccording to the singing of the bees and the repetition of the *Vedas* and the God's name by the parrots is often mentioned.

---

14. Peri Tm. 1.4: 4.

Among the insects the bee is the highly popular one with our saints. It is more attractive to them than the birds. Though the possession of six legs is the characteristic feature of all insects in general, that aspect (*arupatam*) is reserved for the bees by the poets of our country. The keen and loving eye of the poet distinguishes a variety of them: *vaṇṭu, curumpu, varīvaṇṭu, tumpi* etc. The poets lose their heart in their hum and dance round the honey of the flowers; hence the general name '*matukaram*' to them.

The monkeys (a variety of them viz., *kaṭuvan, manti, kuraṅku*), the loving couple of elephants, the dark buffalo, the varieties of deer (*pulvāy, kalai, marai, māṉ*) the yak, the boar varieties (*keḻal, ēṉam*), the tiger, the lion, the *mācuṇam* (perhaps python), the wild dog, the must elephant, and the jackal, engage the attention of those poets and they occupy a happy place in their hymns. The mention of the *āḷi* by these poets is perhaps in the sense of a lion; for, otherwise, it is a mythological animal. Such descriptions as a female monkey requesting the male monkey sitting on a high peak in the Tirupati hills to pluck out the full moon from the sky and give it to her, and a male elephant offering prayer to the Lord add beauty to their verses.[15]

The poet-saints enjoy the glimpses of divine beauty in the moving, jumping and darting of the fish in the rushing floods and in the sleeping ponds. *Vāḷai, kayal, varāl, keṇṭai, cēl, āval, veḷ iravu* and *malañku* (serpent fish) are the favourite fish varieties mentioned in the hymns. The crab varieties (*nāṇṭu, nalli, alavaṉ*), and the tortoise have all attracted the attention of the Āḻvārs along with the sacred conches *ippi, caṅku* and *vālampuri*.

But in the mysticism of the Āḻvārs and Nāyaṉmārs and other later Tamil poets like Kampaṉ there is no boundary line between nature, human nature and God since they have a strong faith in the immanence of God in all things as well as in man and also His transcendence. Nature sets the stage for

15. Mū. Tv. 58, 70.

Man; he can rise from animal nature in the suitable environment. To the Indian mystic the universe appears animated by the vital impulses of God. To him the universe of *acit* and *cit* has its unity only in Brahman. It is the creative expression of the divine sports of love. The beauties of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of God. The whole Cosmos appear in His *Rūpa* which Viśiṣṭādvaitins call *sarīra* of God. The universe as form of God was revealed to Arjuna.[16] The universe appears as the divine Light to Poykaiyāḻvār who says:

> "Vaiyam takaḷiyā vārkaṭalē neyyāka
> Veyya katirōṉ viḷakkāka"[17]

– 'The world is the bowl; the sea is the ghee; the fierce-rayed sun is the luminous wick'.

It cannot be said that the objective world does exhaust Nature. Nature appearing as the objective world not only includes all that are seen external to us, but includes our body as well. Even this becomes sanctified as the temple of the Lord. People moving with their bodies on this earth also form part of this world and Nature. They are the walking temples, '*naṭamāṭum koyilkaḷ*' as Tirumūliar calls them. "The heart-beat in the mystic is in tune with the heart-beat of the world owing to spiritual community and the immanence of God in each person. Like the germ-cell in the body, the soul is the epitome of the universe as an inter-related living whole"[18] It is the microcosm of the Cosmos macrocosm. As in the macrocosm *(aṇḍam)*, so in the microcosm *(piṇḍam)* the Universal Soul is reflected in the mirror of our individual soul. Nay, He is the '*antaryāmin*' the inner Soul; and as such, He is the Reality of reality, the life of Life; the great

---

16. Bh. G. 11. The Tamil *Kantapurāṇam* gives a description of a similar form of Murukan appearing in the *Viśvarupa* before the *aśura* Cūrapaṉmaṉ.
17. M.Tv. 1.
18. *Mystics and Mysticism*, p. 57.

Light as the *Upaniṣads*[19] put it from which the lesser lights get their illumination. The light of macrocosm is found, as it were, in that of microcosm. Devotion (*aṉpu*) is the lamp-bowl, aspiration (*ārvam* or *prēma*) or hankering after the Lord is the ghee (oil), the blissful heart is the wick and knowledge (*jñāna*) is the bright flame: this is the mystic vision of Pūtattāḻvār in which the Lord appears as the Inner Light.

> "Aṉpē takḷiyā ārvamē neyyāka
> Inpuruku cintai iṭutiriyā – naṉpuruki
> Ñāṉac cuṭarviḷak kēṟṟiṉēṉ nāraṇaṟku
> Ñāṉat tamiḻ purinta nāṉ".[20]

These two lights, the outer and the inner, reveal the hidden Lord who is the soul in all things. So it appears that every soul is the temple of the Lord demanding its worship and service.

Nammāḻvār's mind is so filled with the experience of the beauty of God that He is reminded of Him whenever he beholds the dark clouds, big hills, the vast sea, pitch darkness and the flower called *pūvai* which are ever with the bees and any object dark in appearance.[21] The saint's life which is thinly attached to the body and thus is ready to fly off from there owing to unbearable love for the Lord, becomes firm and the body too becomes stout, when he beholds *pūvaip-pū*, *kāyām-pū*, *karuneytal-pū* and *ceṅkaḻunīr-pū* which are all blue in colour.[22] It is imagined that the clouds should have continuously put forth efforts, and swept over the vast sky, for they must have performed some kind of penance somewhere as otherwise their resemblance to the complexion of the Lord cannot be explained.[23] The Āḻvār who entertained a fancy of this kind seems to address the clouds themselves. "O clouds! what processes (*yoga*) did you adopt to become

19. Muṇ Up. 2.2: 10; Kath. Up. 5: 15; Sv. Up. 6:14.
20. I.Tv. 1
21. P.Tv. 49; cf. M. Tv. 89.
22. ibid. 73; cf. T.V.M. 4.4: 4, 9; 8.5: 8; Nāc. Tm. 9: 4; Nāṉ. Tv. 23.
23. ibid. 85.

similar to God in appearance? How did you obtain these processes? Could this be the penance you had performed by torturing your bodies through wanderings in the vast skies bearing the water for preserving the life of beings? Your getting this result of your penance must be due to the favour of God".[24] The beautiful water-laden cloud with a streak of lightning brings to the mind of Pēyāḷvār the presence of the Lord with Śrī. The cloud does its work of giving protection from the sun's heat and rain by wandering through the sky thus bearing a likeness to the Lord who moves quickly from place to place to protect the suffering humanity. It thunders during the rainy season and resembles in this respect the Lord who blows His conch.[25]

The Āḷvār is reminded of God's complexion by the sight of the blue lilies. The lilies ought to be found in the forests but they did not choose to remain there. They entered into tanks and stood there motionless which is proof of the strength of their legs for performing penance there. Thus they acquired the complexion of the Lord.[26] The sea, which is blue in colour, is said to have acquired this complexion by having always close touch with the body of the Lord who lies there.[27] The blue sapphire when it is beheld, reminds us the complexion of the Lord. The sky at twilight shows the Lord who wears the garland of *tuḷaci*.[28]

The Lord's pervasion in the universe is such that the form of any object whatsoever presents to us only His form, since that object could not exist without Him. The form of Brahmā, the constellations, the blazing fire, the mountains, the eight directions, sun and moon are all the forms of the Lord.[29] His form is presented by the ever moving wind, the vast expanse of the space, the hard earth, the blazing fire,

24. T.V.R. 32.
25. Mū. Tv. 86.
26. T.V.R. 38,
27. M.Tv. 19.
28. Mū. Tv. 87.
29. ibid. 38.

the sun and the moon, men and other living beings inclusive of immobile non-sentient objects.[30] The Lord, who is of the nature of the self-luminous knowledge, pervades the universe through the full length, breadth, height and depth and is the very life of all Nature and of all the selves.[31]

Nature's exhilarating and exuberant charm is such that it more often arouses and inflames the sensuous appetite of the selves. The souls, which have taken up a physical body due to the effects of the past deeds become much impassioned by the impact of the alluring aspects of Nature under the most tempting circumstances.[32] Nature which Yāmuna describes as *māya* and Rāmānuja as obscuring the nature of God, takes a powerful hold on such occasions on men with very rare exceptions. To this class of exceptions belong the religious minded persons, who, affected by intense delectability, find, beneath the sensuousness of such sights, visions of God who is the ultimate basis for such fascinating environments. The religious back-ground, which is furnished by the recitation of the *Vedas*, the performance of the ritualistic acts and such other functions, evokes the emotion of the Āḻvārs with the result that they wax eloquent over the attractive features of the shrine and the presiding deity there. Mystic experience which is the specific feature of the life of devotion of the Āḻvārs is better revealed in their ecstatic presentation of the temples situated in such surroundings.

The hymns of *Nālāyiram* abound in the descriptions of Nature, its mountains, rivers and cities these Āḻvār saints visited. These places are held to be equally holy and divine as the temples where the Lord has chosen to be present as *arcā*. It is therefore tantamount to saying that the description of Nature is one way of describing the Lord Himself. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār describes the Himālayas as a place full of odori-

30. T.V.M. 3.6: 5; cf. ibid., 8.1: 6, 7.
31. ibid. 1.5: 10; cf. Mū. Tv. 24.
32. cf. At the sight of the cloud, the mind of a person, though happy, becomes changed, that is, it entertains a longing (*Meghadūta* 1).

ferous groves where the dark clouds rumble and the heavy feathered peacocks climbing the steep slopes on their bellies dance on the peaks;[33] where roam the sharp-toothed lions which have their abode in the caves and which frighten even the huge mountain-like and majestic tuskers;[34] where in the shade of *veṇkai* trees on flowery beds the tusker sleeps with its consort; and as a great mountain with its slopes on which clouds enclose the *venkai* trees with thick growing pepper creepers entwining them, and with the adjoining hills haunted by striped, battle-ready tigers.[25] The Āḷvār refers to Ciṅka-vēḷkuṉṟam (Ahobilam) where the tigers from their hiding in bamboo bushes watch the tracks of the roaming elephants.[36] In the Tirupati Hills, according to Pūtatāṭḷvār, a male elephant uproots a tender bamboo and thrusts it into a big honey-comb and offers it with sweet honey to its mate.[37] The same idea is repeated by Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār too.[38] This Āḷvār shows Tirumāliruñcōlai Hill to us as a place where, as the clouds having collected water from the deep sea ascend the sky rumbling, the lion, mistaking that sound for the trumpeting of the elephant, roars in reply.[39]

The sacred Gaṅga in its course brings the clothes and garlands of *Apśara* women, and also precious stones;[40] the river, through its main force and with swift currents in its depths, breaks mountains and pushes along its course even huge tuskers.[41] The holy Kāviri also brings in its course the tusks of elephants killed by lions, white-teak trees (*akil*), excellent pearls, and the white locks of hair of mountain deer (*kavari māṉ*) and other such precious mountain finds;[42] the

---

33, Peri. Tm. 1.2: 1.
34. ibid. 1.2: 2.
35. ibid. 1.~: 7.
36. ibid. 1.7: 6.
37. I. Tv. 75.
38. Peri. Tm. 1.2 : 5; cf. K.R. *Ayōtti-cittirakūṭa*. 10.
39. ibid. 9.8 : 6.
40. ibid. 1.4 : 4.
41. ibid. 1.4 : 6,
42. ibid. 3.8: 3.

river in its swelling course carries many kinds of flowers and heaps of mangoes which drop into the river because of the falling of cocoanuts from tall well-grown trees;[43] it also gathers in its course the nine precious stones, the precious pearls in the bamboos and the locks of hair of mountain deer;[44] it collects and carries along white-teak logs, sandal wood logs, gold ingots and pearls;[45] it brings in its course gold ingots, pearls, claws of lions and tusks of elephants.[46]

Nammāḻvār pleads for mercy from the deity at Tirumalai abounding in the blossomed lotuses shining like fire,[47] perhaps reminding us of the presence of Śrī. The clear and beautiful rills in that hill flow with gold dust, pearls and gems, which form part of the minerals imbedded in the dense hilly ranges.[48] This adds to the picturesque scenery of the hill which therefore attracts the devotees to the Lord. Pēyāḻvār offers a graphic description of the hill. The supreme Lord, the indweller, pervading in all the directions, revealing the *Vedas* whose purport He is, is present in the Tirumalai hills which by their loftiness appear to reach the region of the moon and where the waters in the flooded rills raise pleasant and rumbling sounds. That deity is present in the mind of the Āḻvār.[49] The waters too perhaps sing in their wonted tone, the praise of the Lord who has created them.

The towns and cities are spoken of as being surrounded by the beautiful fields and groves. Tiruvallikkēṇi is a town where into the cool, thick groves, with fragrant *kurava* flowers and resounding with the sounds of cuckoos and peacocks, the sun's rays do not penetrate at all.[50] Tirukkōvalūr

---

43. ibid. 4.4: 3.
44. ibid. 5.1: 9; 5.4: 9; 5.7: 10.
45. ibid. 6.9: 5.
46. ibid. 6.9: 6.
47. T.V.M. 6.10: 2.
48. ibid. 6.10: 3.
49. Mū. Tv. 39.
50. Peri. Tm. 2.3: 7.

is described as a place which is like the smithy of the goldsmith, with dark *neytal* flowers as charcoal, with *puṉṉai* buds as pearls, the blossoms as gold, and with red lotuses as fire;[51] as a place where the sweet sugar-cane grows to the music of swarms of honey bees in groves full of *kōṅgu* blossoms, *curapuṉṉai* and *kurava* trees;[52] the town is surrounded by arecanut groves; the arecanut palms have buds resembling white pearls, the ripening ones becoming green emeralds and the ripened fruits reddening like corals.[53] In the groves near Tiruvakīntrapuram heards of monkeys romp about, eating jack fruits, on *vēṅkai, kōṅku* and *ceṇpaka* trees full of golden flowers.[54] The women agricultural labourers at *Cīkāḷi* take the *neytal* flowers for their eyes and *āmpal* flowers for their lips stand still refraining from weeding operations;[55] the town is surrounded by the fields where the *neytal* flowers resemble the eyes, the lotuses the faces and the *āmpal* flowers the collection of lips of beautiful women;[56] where in the groves the juice oozes out of jack fruits with the weight of which the branches are bent down, because of the fall of ripened arecanuts as a result of squirrels leaping about from branch to branch.[57] The description of Nāṅkūr is catching. Near that town the buffaloes keep wallowing in pools with mud on their horns after having eaten up well grown sugarcanes;[58] on the top of mansions abound pearls dropped from clouds pierced by spears planted on the building top;[59] beside the beautiful groves the sound of the musical instrument spread sky-high; the hum of the bees, the chant of *Vedas*, and the tinkling of the anklets of women combine into something like the roar of the floods at the time of Deluge;[60] the

51. ibid. 2.10: 3.
52. ibid. 2.10: 4.
53. ibid. 2.10: 7.
54. ibid. 3.1: 5.
55. ibid. 3.4: 3.
56. ibid. 3.4: 5. cf. Tēraḷuntūr hymn 7.5: 10.
57. ibid. 3.4: 8.
58. ibid. 3.8: 6.
59. ibid. 3.9: 4.
60. ibid. 3.10: 5.

peacocks dance to the hum of bees at the time of the rumbling of clouds overhanging the cool and vast groves;[61] the young arecanut trees drop their pearl-like buds into crab-holes vacated by the crabs which with wide open mouths enter the lotus flowers on slushy ground;[62] the gazelle-eyed, red-lipped damsels teach soft words to emerald-green parrots perching on their hands.[64] In the groves surrounding Puḷḷam-pūtaṅkuṭi the *curumpus* (species of wasps) drone on fragrant flowers, comely peacocks dance. and striped winged bees make music.[64] In Kūṭalūr the fish in water mistake the sword-flower (*tāḷam-pū*) on the shore for cranes and get frightened.[65] In the mango groves at Tiruveḷḷaṟai the cuckoos to counter the bitter tang of tender mango leaves pecked at by them drink the sweet juice of jack fruits.[96] The mansions at Tiruk-kaṇṇaṅkuṭi are surrounded by plantain fields heavily laden, arecanut trees growing tall, *kurava* trees, fine jack fruit trees, cool mango groves and *mātavi* creepers;[67] in that place herds of peacocks roaming the woods stop to dance as thick clouds provide drum music with their rumbling, and as the bees in search of honey hum tunes.[68] The world is thus the beautiful garment of God to these mystic seers.

The Tirukkuṭantai hymn glorifies the deity at Kumba-konam and is stated to have fascinated Nāthamuni and aroused in him a burning zeal to unearth all the compositions, depicts Tirukkuṭanti (Kumbakonam) in an ideal setting with the prosperous rich paddy fields all around, assured of plenty of water supplied to them.[69] The lotuses grown there often remind us of the Lord's enchanting eyes.[70] The place

61. ibid. 4.2: 3.
62. ibid. 4.4: 1.
63. ibid. 4.4: 6. cf. 3.8: 8.
64. ibid. 5.1: 1.
65. ibid. 5.2: 9.
66. ibid. 5.3: 4.
67. ibid. 9.1: 6.
68. ibid. 9.1: 7; 1.10: 6; 2.3: 2; cf. P.Tv. 5, 70.
69. T.V.M. 5.8: 1.
70. ibid. 5.8: 2.

abounds in rich mansions where dwell persons supreme through their devotion to the Lord.[71] It is no surprise, if the Āḷvār grows rapturous and addresses the deity as supreme through enchanting beauty and exclaims that he could not contain the insatiable beauty.[72] He is the fascinating melodious music of the *viṇā*, nectar, fruit of the wisdom, the bold lion[73] and the hill of corals shooting up to the stellar region.[74] When He entered the mind of the Āḷvār, He was not visible as He was then formless but after entering, He possessed a divine form. Being an insatiable nectar, He is deliciously sweet not to the tongue which cannot taste it, but mystically relished from within.[75] Nammāḷvār's experience is the result of the surroundings which tempt the religious emotion to burst into rhapsody.

Nammāḷvār yearns with severe longing to reach the feet of the Lord of Tiruvallavāḷ where the shrine is situated amidst the groves rich in floral-juices and jasmine flowers.[76] Trees like *puṉṉai*, *makiḷ*, *mātavi*, arecanut and cocoanut palms, and plantain and others wafting gentle fragrance.[77] The lotuses which by their beauty remind the lustrous and enchanting faces of women, the sweet hum of the bees and gentle breeze lend charm to the surroundings providing an ideal and favourable mental attitude to drink deep the charm of the Lord.[78] The shrine at Tirukkāṭkarai fascinates him by its natural surroundings to such an extent that the Āḷvār feels the intense longing no longer bearable. The streets in this place are fragrant with blue lotuses (*kāvi*) and the mind of the Āḷvār loses its balance while it reflects on the beauty of the Lord in this shrine.[79] The tanks and

71. ibid. 5.8 : 3.
72. ibid. 5.8 : 5.
73. ibid. 5.8 : 6.
74. ibid. 5.8 : 9.
75. ibid. 5.8 : 10; cf. ibid. 6.10 : 3.
76. ibid. 5.9 : 1.
77. ibid. 5.9 : 2, 4.
78. ibid. 5.9 : 6, 7, 9.
79. ibid. 9.6 : 1.

groves of flowering trees remind the Āḷvār of the greatness of the Lord. The mind melts at the thought of this place and the soul cannot tolerate his singing the greatness of the Lord.[80] The Āḷvār is at a loss to understand the Grace of the Lord with which He enjoyed the soul of this insignificant person.[81] The rich flooded regions on the southern bank of the Kāviri where the shrine of Tiruppērnakar is situated remind the Āḷvār of the happy setting of Tirumāliruñcōlai, where the deity entered into the Āḷvār and fully occupied his mind [82] The groves abounding with the hum of the bees fill the Āḷvār's mind when the Lord entered his mortal frame and removed all the *karma*.[83]

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār recapitulates how the Lord at Tiruvāli entered into him out of His own accord and afforded him a delectable experience. The Āḷvār could not dissociate the regions from the red sprouts of *acōka*, or of the dance of the peacocks which mistake the smoke rising from the jaggery-manufacturing centres for the dense clouds, reminding the Āḷvār of the huge blue hill lying in the milky ocean.[84] The fishes jumping from the fields during harvest[85] proclaim the prosperous condition of the regions there. The *puṉṉai* trees and the fields inhabited by swans seduce the mind by drawing it towards the slender-waisted women, but the Āḷvār wonders that the Lord took care to place the mind of the Āḷvār at His feet drawing it away from that sensuousness.[86] On the contrary, the sweet melody of music, the boom of the conches, the dispersing sound of the musical instruments and the sweet sound of the dances, prevail at Tiruvāli. They are equally tempting and so the Āḷvār requests the

80. ibid. 9.6: 2.
81. ibid. 9.6: 4, 5.
82. ibid. 10.8: 1; cf. ibid. 2.10.
83. ibid. 10.8: 5.
84. Peri. Tm. 3.5: 1.
85. ibid. 3.5 : 3.
86. ibid. 3.5 : 4.

Lord not to leave his mind now engaged in worshipping Him with flowers.[87]

The tender paddy stalks wafted by the gentle breeze present the picture of chowries. The swans, koels, peacocks, and parrots move about their wonted way in the rich fields and groves of plantains and arecanuts. Such surroundings at Tiruvaḷuntūr allured the Āḷvār to identify the Lord in the shrine there with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's whose elegant sports receive a graphic depiction.[88] Tirukkaṇṇaṅkuṭi is a place refreshed with floral scents emanating from the flowers like jasmine. The Lord is therefore He who took the form of the Fish who controlled the ever-surging flood.[89] The swans are seated on the lotuses, the lotus-leaves above them appearing like umbrella.[90] The peacocks dances in the groves, the clouds issue the gentle rumbling sound of the drum and the intoxicated bees hum probably to applaud the feets of Śrī Rāma.[91] Tirukkaṇṇapuram has a peculiar attraction to Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār where there is the shrine for the Lord who held high up the Govardhana hill. It is but natural that this place should be surrounded by waters which take with them in their course creepers of corals.[92] The clouds and columns of smoke of amber should proclaim that the blue-complexioned Lord is enshrined there.[93] Hares and fishes move about in the shallow fields.[94]

To Nammāḷvār the Lord becomes every thing. He is the fire, the water, the earth, the sky and the wind; He is the mother, the father, and the sons and daughters; He is other things beyond these, and one and all. He is the sound of the

---

87. ibid. 3.5 : 5.
88. ibid. 7.8.
89. ibid. 9.1 : 3.
90. ibid. 9.1 : 5.
91. ibid. 9.1 : 7; cf. ibid. 9.1 : 9.
92. ibid. 8.3 : 1.
93. ibid. 8.3 : 2.
94. ibid. 8.7 : 3.

strings of the harp, the sugar-cane juice and the nectar.[95] He is the sun and the moon; the numerous beautifull stars and darkness; the down-pour of rain, praise and blame alike; and cruel death with cruel eyes.[96] He is the prime mover of all the *yugas* and of the innumerable similar and dissimilar objects in those *yugas*.[97] He is being and non-being, numerous sentient and non-sentient beings and the prime mover behind all these.[98] He is body and soul, elimination and generation and the player of tricks of illusion.[99] He is forgetfulness and remembrance, heat and coldness, the quality of wonder as well as the objects of wonder, victory and defeat, deed and its fruits.[100] He is the doer of deeds of sorrow, arrogance, gratification, desires which bring sorrows, the measure of things, the static and the dynamic.[101] He is the three worlds, their creator, the one immanent in them and transcendent over them.[102] He is the desired taste, sight, touch, sound and smell of all the organs and the senses.[103] He is the Form celebrated in the ancient scriptures as well as the Formless.[104] So His nature and shape are impenetrable to all.[105] That the behaviour of Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki in her intense love of God, as described by her mother, will clearly reveal that God is all.[106] "All the world is the creation of Kaṇṇan" - '*Ēṛiya pittiṉōṭu ellā ulakum kaṇṇaṉ paṭaippu eṉṉum*'.[107]

Nammāḻvār enjoys the wonder of the self-contradic-

95. T.V.M. 2.3 : 7; 5.8 : 6; 7.1 : 6.
96. ibid. 7.8 : 2.
97. ibid. 7.8 : 3.
98. ibid. 7.8 : 4.
99. ibid. 7.8 : 5.
100. ibid. 7.8 : 6.
101. ibid. 7.8 : 7.
102. ibid. 7.8 : 8.
103. ibid 7.8 : 9.
104. ibid. 7.8 : 10.
105. ibid. 7.8 : 11.
106. ibid. 4.4.
107. ibid. 4.4 : 7.

tions of the world play or *viruddha vibhūti*[108] of the wonderful *Māyin* and seeks to laugh it away by trying to go beyond it. In the blending of the joy of the eternal realism and the tragic tension of the realm of *samsāra*, there results the aesthetic feeling that the cosmos has a cosmic touch. The Āḷvār is simply amazed at His paradoxical glory in the course of which he gives free and full expression to his feelings of wonder and amazement at the way the Lord manifests Himself in the world. He puts a question point-blank to Him to divulge the secret by which He manages to be all this. This is perhaps a question to which no answer is vouchsafed except that He is "*aṟivu ariya pirāṉ*"[109] – 'the Lord who cannot be understood by human intellect'. The Āḷvār himself says in another context: "I of very small intellect hanker to see Him who cannot be known by any one. Can there be a greater folly than this?"[110] Unfitness to sing of Him is gradually disclosed to be only a corollary to the appreciation of the Lord's unsurpassed greatness, which is far above human ken. One can see that Āḷvār's modesty is not born of a superficial sense of conventionality, but out of an abiding sense of His indescribability. The Āḷvār refers to the comparisons, similes and analogies, that he and others of his ilk indulge in very often, while trying to describe His indescribable beauty and features: "The lotus can never equal Thy eye or feet or hand. Molten gold can come nowhere near the resplendence of Thy Form. And so the comparisons and the suggestions we employ in order to praise Thee, only show how small and trivial our attempts to praise Thou art";[111] and again "All the sacred words that are uttered by any one in any world are nothing but a pale reflection of Thy praise. What words can I employ to sing in praise of Thee."[112] "What shall I call Thee" is the refrain of a whole hymn. "Shall I call Thee Earth, Sea, Fire,

---

108. T.V.M. 6.3.
109. ibid. 5.5: 11.
110. ibid. 1.5: 7.
111. ibid. 3.1: 2.
112. ibid. 3.1: 6.
113. ibid. 3.4: 1; cf. P.Tv. 11.

Wind, Sky, Sun and Moon?[113] Shall I call Thee the groups of mountains, loving rain, the ever-shining constellations of stars, the arts that are mouthed by the tongue, or the very breath which is ultimately responsible of these arts?[114] Shall I call Thee medicine that is desired by every one, or the nectar of the sea of Milk?[115] Shall I call Thee milk, or shall I speak of Thee as the cream and essence of the four *Vedas*, or the religious code" ?[116] and so on. There are about fifty-two '*eṅkos*' (engo=Shall I say thus?) in the first eight verses of this hymn. It is seen here how the Āḻvār fumbles and flounders for words and expressions suited to describe Him.

The God is both eminent and imminent; He is inside the world becoming the world itself, but He is beyond it all. The statement of the Āḻvār that Brahmā, Śiva and Indra are beyond the ken of vision of men, but Kaṇṇaṉ (Viṣṇu) beyond the ken of these gods themselves[117] emphasizes this great truth. Nammāḻvār is not a mere Nature mystic. He intuits God in Nature and also as transcending it. He says: "Thou art the soul of the world; Thou art in the shape of the released souls which extend in all ten directions innumerably in the outer space";[118] "Thou art the prime mover of the permanent three worlds; having created them, Thou art both immanent and transcendent in these";[119] "whatever is beyond this world, Thou art that too;......Thou art also what are beyond the grasp of the senses;"[120] "He is the life-principle behind all that is beyond the Universe too;[121] "Thou art the prime mover behind the 'elements' and the life-principle. Thou art the ethereal space, and also Brahmā and Śiva who are in

114. ibid. 3.4 : 2.
115. ibid. 3.4 : 5.
116. ibid. 3.4 : 6.
117. T.V.M. 7.7 : 11. cf. 1.3 : 9; 1.9 : 5; 1.9 : 8; 3.1 : 10; 3.10 : 9; 4.10 : 4 10.7 : 6; 10.7 : 7; 10.10 : 3.
118. ibid. 6.9 : 7.
119. ibid. 7.8 : 8.
120. ibid. 8.1 : 6.
121. ibid. 8.8 : 2.

it ";[122] " Thou art the ever expanding Form which informs and enfolds within itself the dimensions of space, the Self of self, which is larger than these, and also transcends the above two ".[123]

In this connection, transcendence *(anantatva)* of the Lord is to be considered from several angles. In point of time, He is unlimited, as time is under His control, rather He is the Lord of time.[124] In respect of space, He knows no limitations. Even in the finitised visible form as Tirivikrama, the world which He measured could not be fully pervaded by His foot, as the world was so small that His foot is to be treated as having gone beyond the world.[125] In His formless condition there is no vocabulary to render His greatness. Hence the *Vedas* confined themselves to stating that He has a thousand heads, thousand eyes, and thousand feet. It is said that He pervaded the entire earth and stood beyond to the extent of ten inches [126] Here the word '*thousand*' must be taken to mean '*countless*'[127] and the word '*inch*' *(aṅgula)* must mean 'an unlimited extent'.[128] The words '*ten inches*' shall mean that 'this is only an attempt to span the space to the extent of which He extended and this is only an apology for the space which cannot be measured fully and accurately'. There is a third kind of transcendence according to which there is no object anywhere which could bear any comparison to Him.[129]

122. ibid. 10.10:4.
123. ibid. 10.10: 10.
124. ibid. 1.1:2; 3.8:8.
125. cf. M.Tv. 84.
126. R.V. 10.90:1.
127. *Puruṣasūkta Bhāṣya*, p. 21; cf. Bh.G. 11: 19.
128. Ahi S. 59: 21.
129. T.V.M. 3.1:10.

CHAPTER XX

BRIDAL MYSTICISM

The experience of God which falls to the lot of the mystic is one of joy and calm which could be described as the milder aspect of mysticism.[1] The disappointments which the mystic feels when he could not approach God or when he does not have the vision of God imbedded in him show his sufferings of pain of the negative kind.[2] These aspects of mysticism as experienced by the mystics continually leave indelible impressions with them making them recount their experiences with joy at times and with sorrow at others. The other aspect of love for God which is evidenced in the life of the mystics is intense and is termed as sweetness of God as opposed to the milder tone which is referred to as pure truth.[3] This is to mean that in the milder stage, the reality of God is experienced directly by the mystic. This experience is real and correct and as such is full, and being free any flaw shall be treated as Pure Truth. It is characterized by the cognitive element which dominates it. When this milder aspect continues and is developed, it grows intense and the experience becomes sweet and pleasant. This intense stage is marked by the experience of joy and positive pain. The mystic "sometimes 'wrestles in prayer' seeking in vain to regain the lost sense of peace and to escape the ache and hollowness of a life that longs for God and apprehends Him, yet cannot come to Him."[4] "He regards conceptual knowledge as ever unsatisfying or meaningless, and immediate experience as the only trustworthy guide and the only solid satisfaction".[5] Any thing that distracts his

---

1. cf. *The Religious Consciousness* p. 348.
2. ibid. p. 352.
3. ibid. p. 348.
4. ibid. p. 353.
5. ibid. p. 366.

attention is treated as unworthy of attention. "The pleasant tone of the milder form of religious experience with which the mystic began now fails to satisfy, or only intensifies his thirst for deeper draughts of the Divine".[6] He therefore longs for union with God. The intense stage of love for God is chiefly characterized by emotion and imagination. The mystic has never-failing confidence in his emotional experience and very vivid imagination. In this respect, he is a romanticist.[7]

The intense love of the mystic for God has one fundamental characteristic feature. The Lord is the storehouse of innumerable, ineffable virtues which sustain the mystic by drawing him very close to Him and yearn for reunion when the material factors pull him away to this world. In this yearning, the mystic chooses to be quiet, submissive to the Lord and is passive. He surrenders himself to Him to look after his interests fully confident that He would not let him down. Even if let down, He alone can lift him up. The moments of union with Him fill him with much feeling. "Enthusiastic surrender, a delicate capacity for feeling, soft passiveness"[8] characterize the life of a mystic. These are not enforced on him from without nor received against the individualistic spirit, as a man does out of necessity to eke out his livelihood by serving a master. They form part of the nature of woman and mysticism is therefore called "the religion of feminine nature".[9] The purpose of such a life is the experience of bliss or esoteric joy which is not altogether distinct, in feeling, though different in the nature of feeling from the enjoyment of the sensual kind which a woman longs to have and experiences in the company of a man. It could therefore be said that a mystic whether man or woman has much of the nature of the woman. More often than not, the mystic passes through the several stages which

6. ibid. p. 368.
7. ibid. pp. 366, 67.
8. View of Heilar cited in the *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 65.
9. ibid. p. 65.

a bride undergoes in the periods of wedding-day and honeymoon. To this extent, the mystic experience of a devotee could be described as bridal in its aspects.

The view that God is the Bridegroom and the devout and ardent soul of the devotee, the bride, is an allegorical expression of the intimate communion between the soul on the one hand and God on the other; this mystic view, expressed in beautiful and sensible figures and similes, has been prevalent both in the East as well as in the West. In what could be called the spiritual marriage (*ātma vivāha*), the Lord descends from His almightiness to the human level of lowliness, and longs for the joyous embrace of, and union with, the human soul. The Vedānta philosophy of Nammāḷvār and Rāmānuja interpreted as Vaiṣṇavism defines Brahman the Absolute as God the Beautiful (*Bhuvana Sundara*) and regards this mystic experience of communion with Him as the consummation of the philosophy of love. In this process the soul, rendered ugly by karma, is purified and transformed into His own nature. It is a matter of common knowledge, at least among philosophers, that God as Lord is feared, as Father revered, as Master honoured and served, but as Bridegroom is loved. Love is not a contract nor a holy sentiment but is its own end and is love for love's sake. The soul is inwardly embraced by the arms of wisdom and it tastes of heavenly sweetness. The presence of the Beloved is felt in the interior of the soul. In the divine influx of the union, all self-feeling is transformed and divinised.

"Love wrapped me in its all-dissolving power
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle with my blood,
Till it became His life and His grew mine.
And I was thus absorbed".

This is how Shelley gives expression to this transforming power. All these suggest the relationship of the ideal lovers. This spiritual realisation becomes the story of the love of the soul, the betrothed becoming the wedded love, losing itself in the embrace and rapture of union with the Lord.

Bridal mysticism has been well explained by the commentators on the *Nālāyiram*. The Caṅkam literature has idealised love; its poetry of love is the poetry of the noumenon. As the Vaiṣṇavite commentators point out, the Āḻvārs start singing in '*tāṉāṉa taṉmai*' i e., as themselves as men but in the white heat of their passion for God they lose themselves and sing in '*pirāṭṭiyāṉa taṉmai*' i.e., as the lady-love. In the Āḻvārs' hymns the whole of a hymn is either in '*tāṉāṉa taṉmai* or *pirāṭṭiyāṉa taṉmai*'. Aḻakiya Māṇavāḷap-perumāḷ Nāyaṉār has beautifully summarized this aspect of Āḻvārs in the aphoristic sūtra style as, "*jñāṉattil taṉ pēccu*; *prēmattil peṇ peccu*".[10] (In the path of *jñāna* there is the speech of the poet as himself; in love there is the speech of the poet as the lady who loves). The idealised love of the Caṅkam age, purified still further by Tiruvaḷḷuvar in his immortal *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and identified with God by Tirumūlar, is revealed in all its concrete elaboration in this story of the love of the eternal lovers – the soul and God. The Āḻvārs and the Nāyaṉmārs turn in their poetry into women pining for the embrace of God.

The mysticism of spiritual marriage must be interpreted very carefully as having spiritual content and value. *Kantabhāva (kaṟpu)* is the experience of the bride and the bridegroom. *Madhurabhāva (kaḷavu)* is the experience of clandestine love. Both are free from carnality and fleshly lusts. The craving for contacting God is clothed in the language of sex borrowed from the science of erotics. It is therefore sometimes misunderstood and erroneously spoken of as erotic mysticism. But it must be borne in mind that those who criticise have completely ignored the transcendental experience of the Divine Presence and the influx of the Divine Love which passes human understanding and surpasses the psychological ways of knowing. The symbolic terminology employed here is entirely free from morbidity and erotomania; there is nothing degrading about this love. What is *Bhagavat kāma* is transempirical and it is described here in terms of *viṣaya kāma*; but the difference between them is like that between

10. A.H. Sūtra, 118.

the dog and the dog-star. It is nothing but a method of explaining the unknown by the known; and the method is pressed into service since there is no other popular and psychological way of expressing the inexpressible. But all these are metaphors and symbols, for the Real transcends all this terminology. The ecstatic joy of the mystic is the joy of his union with God. "All other pleasure beside that of enjoying God seems to be insipid".[11] Some mystics expressly say "Suddenly I feel myself transformed and changed; it is the joy unspeakable ....I grasp something inwardly as with the embracements of love......I struggle deliciously not to lose this thing, while I desire to embrace without end".[12] 'Embracement', 'ravishment'[13] and such other expressions used by the Western writers on Mysticism bring out clearly the union which the mystics enjoy. "Those to whom this heavenly love is known may get some conception of it from earthy love, and what joy it is to obtain possession of what one loves most".[14]

The aspect of bridal mysticism has much in common with the experiences of the individuals in the age of adolescence. The periods during this age are marked by storm and stress and doubt. The spontaneous awakening which the individuals face has got a significant bearing on their attitude towards religious experience. Emotional and spiritual aspects dominate this experience in proportions which vary from individual to individual. While men have less of the emotional aspect, women are much awakened to it. While women do not have a deep insight into spiritual truth, spirituality has greater attraction for men. It is most likely that religious experience which is marked by much of emotional feeling should be associated with the feminine features. The mystics therefore are prone to treat themselves as the bride of God, not as belonging to either of the sexes.

---

11. Vide for citation, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 416.
12. Vide for citation, ibid. p. 417.
13. ibid. p. 420.
14. View of Plotinus cited, ibid. p. 418.

The emotional turmoil of adolescence suggests highly the storm and doubt which fill the young devotee of God. Although it would not be proper to equate the period of the mystic's life which is marked by romanticism with the period of adolescence in the real sense of the term, it would be true to admit that the period of bridal mysticism precedes the stage of the mystic's life when the emotional life quiets down. "Youth is the time for hailing the vision and coming to love the light; the religious task of the great middle years is to live and act in the light that has been seen ".[15] This equalisation of bridal mysticism with adolescence cannot, however, be carried on beyond a limit. While the interests of active life in the youthful periods lose their hold upon the mind o the person who imperceptibly grows into age, the religious experience does not lose its hold on the person in his later days. The religious men who is getting old "finds clustering all the lively impressions and the pleasant pictures of his childhood, and all his hopes and longings for the mysterious Beyond. So religion becomes the storehouse of the values of the Past and the Future, and stands to him for life itself".[16]

The reason for the mystic's experiencing the feminine feeling of emotion is not also difficult to seek. The mystic is usually unaware of sexual delight and sexual desire which permeate most of the life of the living being in a mild and disguised way. The mystic has this as any other person has but, being essentially pure, is free from all taint of the sexual natures. What happens in his body as the resonance of the emotion is of no interest to him, but others who evaluate his love of God find much interest in it. To be aware of carnality of such desires and yet to be deeply devoted to God can only be taken as inconsistent.

According to Catholic theology sex has a spiritual meaning in spiritual marriage. Edward Ingram Watkins emphasizes that the male element is operative, active, and directive, whilst

15. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 120.
16. ibid. p. 120.

the feminine is responsive and receptive thus each being complementary to or co-operating with God.[17] Coventry Patmore, the mystic poet, treats a true woman as God's image infusing clod with purity. Heavenly marriage is the original of the earthly marriage. God is the husband of the Heavenly and every soul in the bridal dispensation is a worm before God who does justice to the feminine factor. The Christian mystic Richard of St. Victor speaks of four stair-ways of love: (a) the betrothal, where the soul thirsts for the Beloved; (b) the marriage, where the Absolute leads the soul as its bride; (c) the wedlock, where the soul is oned with God and transfigured into Him and (d) the copulation or union when the soul is caught up into divine delight. The creature is put off and the Creator is put on. The soul submits to the Divine embrace. The Hound of Heaven hunts the separated soul and wounds it.[18] According to Miss Underhill the simile of marriage and of the embrace is a parallel on a lower level to the consummation of mystic love owing to the virtues of mutuality, irrevocableness and intimacy, the well known marks of ancient marriage.[19]

The Āḷvārs and the Nāyaṉmārs speak this language of love in giving expression to their mystic experience. *Kāma* there is not *viṣaya kāma* or sensual passion; it is *Bhagavat kāma*, spiritual love. "*Kaṇṇaṉukkē ām atu kāmam*" is the Vaiṣṇavite explanation of Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār.[20] "To love Lord Kṛṣṇa and none else is real love" is its meaning. The

17. *Philosophy of Mysticism*, (Ed. 1919), p. 330 ff.
18. *Mysticism*, p. 139.
19. ibid. p. 138.
20. R.N. 40. The word '*Kātal*' employed in *Akam* poetry denote the kindness to all sorts of relatives including husband and wife (Ain 195; N.R.R. 241, 237; AKN. 275, 310). It has gradually enlarged to express all kinds of love, and has become a synonym with '*aṉpu*' and '*paṟṟu*'. The general idea implied in the use of the word is the mental attachment between the being that loves and the object of love irrespective of physical contact. The word '*kāmam*' is now understood to mean a reckless indulgence of sexual impulse. In Caṅkam period normal physical passion was meant by this word (AKN. 28). The bodily union of the lovers is known by '*kāmakkūṭṭam*' (TLK. 3.3:1). Tiruvaḷḷuvar names the third part of the book *Tirukkuṟaḷ* as '*Kāmattuppāl*' and removes the sting in the word.

concept of *kāma* is enshrined in the *Upaniṣad*. The classical explanation of *kāma* is given by the sage Yājñavalkya, the super-vedantin, to his worthy wife Maitreyī at the time of his renunciation or resort to *sannyāsa*. Maitreyī realises the truth of the wise saying, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" and asks him to teach her the way to immortal bliss. The sage imparts to her in imperishable language the meaning of *ātma kāma*: "Verily is the husband dear, not for the love of the husband, but for the love of *ātman*. Everything is dear not for the love of everything but for the love of *ātman* is everything dear. The *ātman* should be reflected on and realised".[21] *Kāma* may be of three kinds, viz., *viṣaya kāma*, *ātma kāma* and *Bhagavat kāma*. *Viṣaya kāma* is desire for the objects of sense, and its satisfaction is momentary and fraught with pain in all its stages, and it lands one finally in the wilderness of *samsāra*. One has then to retrace one's steps and follow the way of *ātma kāma* by self-control and introversion. The joy of self-realisation is, no doubt, enduring, but it arises from the flight of 'the alone to the alone' and being a state of solid singleness it is tinged with egoism. *Bhagavat kāma* is love directed to the Lord who is the source and centre of all human love. When *kāma* is spiritualised and directed God-ward, it loses its sting and is reckoned a virtue. *Kāma* is the urge of love, but as *Bhagavat kāma*, it is a craving for the spiritual marriage with the Beloved. Love is a relation between the *ātman* and its eternal 'other' and is a longing for a communion. When it becomes an infinite longing for the Infinite, as in the case of Maitreyī, it leads to immortal bliss. When, therefore, instincts are harmonised and spiritualised, they become the eternal creative expression of Divine Love. Not only *kāma*, but even *krodha* (anger), *dveṣa* (hatred) when directed to God with devotion lose their sting and become transformed into the mystic instinct for the Infinite.[22] Evil is changed into goodness and goodness into godliness as Brahman permeates all beings and brahmanises them.

---

21. Br. Up. 4.5 : 6.
22. Bhāg. P. 10. 29: 15.

The ancient Tamils have their technique in portraying their adventures of love which are designed to promote intimacy, fidelity and mutualness. The literary conventions of the age are seen not only in the gracious blending of the human passions with the beauties of nature. They have also classified the sentiments of love in accordance with the different regions and assigned them to particular seasons and hours.[23] The regions are five: One part is *Kuriñci*, the mountainous region considered appropriate for pre-marital love. The second is *Mullai*, the pastoral tract which is the setting for the idyllic home life of chastity and peace. The third is *Pālai*, the desert region, enhancing the feeling of desolation in the poetry of love in separation. The fourth is *Neytal*, the coastal region or seaboard, enhancing the feeling of desolation and despair, when in the course of pre-marital love there is an inexplicable, continued absence of the hero. The fifth is *Marutam*; this agricultural tract of civilised life full of wealth and pomp, characterised by the institution of public women gives rise sometimes to suspicion and sometimes to escapades into extramarital relationship, and this enhances the heroine's sulky mood.[24] Each of these regions

---

23. T.L.K. 3.1: 5 to 10 and their commentaries. The ancient poets have found out that in a particular season of the year and in a particular hour of the day, a particular region appears most beautiful and most influential, that every landscape is seen best under the peculiar illumination of a season and a period of it when its influence is powerful on human impulses and activities. Thus the different stages of love have also been correlated to the different aspects of natural environment.

24. According to *Tolkāppiyam* (T.L K. 3.1: 5) the Tamil land surrounded by seas on three sides was divided into four regions viz., *Mullai*, *Kuriñci*, *Marutam* and *Neytal*. The concept of '*nānilam*' has this significance. But the term *Aintiṇai* in Tamil Grammar denotes the five different aspects of love conduct. Of these, except *Pālai*, the other four love aspects have thair own regions. *Pālai* has no region of its own because there is no arid desert tract in Tamil Nad. This is the reason why inhabitants of desert found no place in *Akattiṇai* as heroes and heroines and as no part of the desert was set as the background for the meeting of the lovers except the incidents of separation of the lovers of the four regions being described. Through Tamil Nad has no desert proper at all times, it has a long and hot summer, capable turning mountainous and pastoral tracts into desert-like appearance (CLP. 2.11: ll. 64–6).

has its own peculiar *flora* and *fauna* and other aspects and so each mood of the lovers viz., union, patient suffering, separation, sorrows of separation and the protests of unrequited love is coloured by the euvironment and conditioned geographically. It is worthy of note that, though the geographic control of life and growth is an idea recently reached by science and newly expounded in treatises on Anthropogeography the genius of the ancient Tamil poets somehow understood this influence of natural environment on the life of men and established conventions in their works especially on love and its various aspects.[25] The poetry of *Akattiṇai* is the poetry of the noumenon, the poetry of the inner inspiration of love, something to be felt and realised but only to be hinted to those who have had similar experience. The hero is no particular person; and according to the poetic convention his name should nowhere be mentioned.[26] Therefore *Akam* poetry does not express anything with reference to any particular person; it is something universal, common to all men, and thus seen and revealed in the ideal situations of a man. It is best revealed from the various situations of a homely love, starting as a providential and natural pre-marital love (*iyaṟkaippuṇarcci*); only persons attached to the family are chosen as characters to figure in this poetry. The five various aspects or sentiments of this love, as pointed out already, are the first union (*puṇartal*), separation (*pirital*), married love of peace (*iruttal*), sorrows of desolation and despair (*iraṅkal*) and the protests of unrequited love (*ūṭal*). The names of different regions have also been ascribed to the different aspects of love also.[27]

The importance of the conception of God as Cosmic Beauty becomes significant when the Lord steals our hearts

---

25. *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, p. 178. cf. *The History of Tamils* (Chap. 1).

26. T.L.K. 3.1: 57.

27. Among the characters numbering fourteen who figure in the love episode of the hero and the heroine of the Chaṅkam literature, the Āḻvārs have pressed into service only two viz., mother of the heroine and her maid-companion. For the role or these fourteen characters, Vide: *Tolkāppiyam Kāṭṭum Vāḻkkai*, pp. 55-65.

as "*Kaḷvan*"[28] "*Paṭiṟan*"[29] "*Perāḷan*".[30] He is the *Puruṣottama*, where all souls become His beloved in love with Him, a love which transcends even the love of the husband and wife. To the Hindu mystic, the *tattva* is Brahman the Beautiful, the *hita* is *prema* and the realisation of the bliss of Brahman is *puruṣārtha*. *Prema* is thus the spiritual copula between the knowledge of Brahman and the realisation of its bliss. *Brāhmānubhāva* may be mysticaily explained by the experience of love and beauty. The *Bhāgavatham* and the *Bhagavad Viṣayam* are the treasure houses of this experience. The *Bhāgavatam* is the home land of divine *līlā*; and the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, the outpouring of Nammāḷvār, is the spiritual biography of the eternal game of divine love. To the Hindu mystic philososopher, Braman is *ānanda* and *rasa*. The universe has its source and sustenance only in the bliss of the Brahman. It is the theatre, so to say, of the *līlā* of God which aims at turning men into seekers after salvation.

God is Love and it is a dynamic love abhorring its solitude and hankering after union with soul. Love no doubt is a unitive experience, but it presupposes the duality of the experiencing subjects. The *Upaniṣad* explains this truth in the form of a beautiful story : "Brahman was alone before creation as the *Sat* without a second as '*Ēkāki*' and was not pleased. Aloneness gave it no joy; He desired a second and He divided Himself into twain".[31] This twain is the duplication of the one into divided love. In life even the lowest unit is a pair functioning as male and female and the twain are one in love. Self-division into loving pairs is the essence of cosmic life. The Lord who remained alone in the *pralaya* state became *Śrīyahpati*. He experiences creative joy by self-giving and love and becomes complete only by self-division into loving pairs. The one Self that is without a second sports as two, as the lover and the beloved, without losing His wholeness. The blissful Brahman in its sportive act of love

---

28. Peri. Tm. 3.7: 1. cf. T.V.M. 2.2: 10.
29. ibid. 3.7: 2.
30. ibid. 5.5: 8.
13. Br. Up. 1.4: 3.

separates itself from its beloved 'other', seeks it, and then becomes one with it. The Absolute itself assumes a bewitching form of beauty in order to attract its 'other' to Itself and the true dialectic is this triad of love. The cosmic drama depends on this self-division into loving pairs.[32] The cosmos is born in Beauty and the whole creative act is the magic of the divine love. The miracles of love enacted in Gokulam and Brindāvanam and ending with the *Rāsa Lilā* are the symbols of this cosmic drama. Almost all the Āḷvārs revel in the cosmic process as the spontaneous expression of Brahman as the divine artist.

Sex is the secret device of the Divine Artist by which the animal instinct is humanised and spiritualised. If *kāma* as sexual feeling is not humanised, it is bestial and blind, clamant and chaotic, and becomes a deadly vice. But when it is idealized and disciplined into married love, selfishness disappears, and the fleeting voluptuousness of reckless adventure is replaced by the lasting happiness of perfect pleasure. If it is further spiritualized into divine love, it loses all traces of selfishness and becomes ethereally ennobled. While mystic experience may be gained by the way of *yoga* (ascetic introversion) or *bhoga* (hedonistic extroversion), the way of the latter or aesthetic religion has an irresistible appeal to the mystic who follows the method of *Bhagavat kāma*. There are instances for both the types in the lives of the Āḷvārs. Pēyāḷvār was God-mad from his very birth and he may be considered as one who had followed the *yogic* path. But the life of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār was quite different. At first he indulged in *viṣaya kāma* or hedonistic pleasures and later on became a convert to *Bhagavat kāma* for contacting God as the Bridegroom. To the Saivites the Lord is a *Yogi* among yogis and a *Bhogi* among *bhogis*; and the Nāyaṉmārs call both *yogis* and *bhogis* as *tapasvins* and therefore *bhogis* are those who enjoy *Bhagavat kāma*.[33]

The concept of *Akattiṇai* has its bearing on the hymns of the Āḷvārs when they express their spiritual quest and con-

32. cf. Appar: Hymn. 4.3

33. *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram*, p. 1244.

quest. The bride is the soul that yearns for divine union and the Lord who is the Soul of the soul and is one with it and oned with it is the eternal Bridegroom. The joy of the first union *(puṇartal)* or *samśleṣa* is momentary, but it gives a foretaste of the immortal bliss in future. The union is followed by *visleṣa (piriṭal)* or the woes of separation. The forlorn bride is sick-minded and desolate and suffers from the agonies of separation as the heroine in the Caṅkam literature does; her beauty fades away and her spirits are depressed.[34] In her helpless state the bride sends messages of unrequited love to the Lord through the herons, the bees and the cloud and His love is stirred by their moving power.[35] The Lord is then moved by love and at long last the lovers are united and the spiritual wedding takes place. The lover and the beloved, the *nāyaka* and the *nāyaki*, are two in one and one in two like the sun and its light, or the word and its meaning, or the flower and its fragrance. *Kṛṣṇaprema* the quintessence of mystic love in its purity and perfection, as enshrined in in the *Bhagavatam*, attracts the Āḻvārs, especially Āṇṭāḷ, Nammāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. Their expression of the love of God through the medium of *nāyaka-nāyaki* love is unmatched in mystic literature for its moving power. The commentators[36] of *Nālāyiram*, bring out the beauty of the *Akam* poetry of the Āḻvārs by renaming the saints as feminine poetesses: Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki (Nammāḻvār), Parakāla Nāyaki (Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār) etc.

Sex is the master device of nature to draw souls together, and cosmic creation itself is traced to the *Sat* without a second, realizing itself as the male and female principles of life. The science of erotics or *kāma sāstra* is an

34. This state of suffering is aptly called by the Christian mystics 'the dark night of the soul' and it expresses the infinite 'hazards and hardships' of the divided life.

35. In Caṅkam literature it is found the heroine in a context of despair giving expression to her feeling of desolation by addressing the birds, bees and begging them sometimes to go and fetch the hero (Vide N.R.R. 54, 70, 102). This motif has been successfully employed by the Āḻvārs.

36. For example, Sri P.B. Annangaracharlyar.

aesthetic education, which consists in changing the brute feeling into human love and bringing about the psycho-physical at-one-ment of the two souls. The joy of *samśleṣa (puṇartal)* or the union of the lovers is more than the logical separation of the synthesis of opposites. The paradox of love lies in conquest by submission and the heightening of love by *viśleṣa (piriṭal)* or separation of lovers. *Bhaktirasa* is ripe in the process of what is known as the game of love or *samśleṣa* and *viśleṣa*. Mystic idealism utilizes this game to its advantage; it utilizes the fidelity and mutualness given in this game of *sṛṅgāra rasa* and elevates it to the level of the Divine Love of Rādha and Āṇṭāḷ. The Lord plays hide and seek with the beloved soul. The joy of union and the sorrow of separation alternate with each other. The former is momentary and fleeting in this world of *līlā* and it becomes stable and secure only in the world beyond, *nityavibhūti*. In the alternation between union and separation, the soul is freed from sensuality and egoism and yearns for the dawn of unitive consciousness. It is by wise introversion in the state of separation that the soul, which is the bride, comes into proper perspective, distinguishes between what is momentary and changing and what is eternal and permanent and renounces the egocentric feeling of '*my*' and '*mine*' and is purged of its pride. Again, in the state of separation, the bride develops anguish and lapses into depression and despair. The Lord of Love also suffers from the woes of loneliness and yearns for communion with the soul, His beloved. In the rapture of reunion each rushes into the arms of the other and reflection expires in ecstasy.[37] In this way the whole game of love subserves the purpose of soul-making and deification. In the furnace of love, in its austere and arduous purgation of its pride, all the fleshly feelings melt away and the soul and God are glued together in mystic union. This process of mystic union is beautifully portrayed in the mystic experience of two Āḷvārs, Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉaṉ and Nammāḷvār, and in the feminine ardour of Āṇṭāḷ, the foster-daughter of Periyāḷvār.

---

37. It is said, according to Catholic mysticism, the Lord, the Bride-groom, comes thrice in the flesh.

The Āḷvārs, especially Nammāḷvār, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ, are preoccupied with *Kṛṣṇa-prema,* mystic love in its pristine purity and perfection as enshrined in the *Bhāgavatam.* Apart from other modes of worship of the Lord such as chanting His names, contemplating His auspicious qualities, His personal beauty, the glory of His shrines situated in the various places in our country and the greatness of His devotees as it has been explained elsewhere in this work, the Āḷvārs employ their mystic love as an interesting mode of enjoying a relationship with the Lord - that of imagining themselves to be the bride of the Lord's a habit which is part of the general cult of *Madhura bhakti* or *nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva.* This mode is a special feature of their hymns which are in the form of utterances spoken by the maid-companion, by the mother and by the lady-love or the bride of the Lord herself;[38] yet they all centre on the relationship between the Āḷvār-nāyaki and the Lord. The essential dependence of the souls of the Āḷvārs on the Lord leads them to establish this kind of intimate contact with the Lord. Though the language and terms of physical relationships and physical pleasures might be employed, these ultimately point to deeper spiritual, non-physical meanings. The terminology of love-relationship is used more or less as a sort of sugar-coating so that the higher truths are made the more easily consumable.[39] When the maid-companion is introduced in a group of hymns as describing the condition of the *Āḷvār-nāyaki*, she is to be taken as uniting the *Āḷvār-nāyaki* and the Lord for the reason that the soul of the Āḷvār deserves to be united only with the Lord, a link which is implicit in the first word of *Tirumantiram*, namely, "*Ōm*" (aum). When the mother of the *Āḷvār-nāyaki* is introduced in another group of verses as restraining her, it is meant to suggest that the Lord Himself will take the initiative and show the way without our having to make

38. This type of composition is known as the *anyāpadeśa* mode of utterance. By adopting this mode, different levels of emotion are beautifully presented, and an effect of interesting variety is attained.

39. cf. *Iraiyanār Akapporuḷ*-sut 1 (Commentary - the meaning of the word '*kāmam*').

extra-ordinary efforts. This idea is implied in the second word of *Tirumantiram*, namely '*Namah*' *(namō)*. When the *Āḷvār-nāyaki* speaks in her own person in a third group of hymns, what is implied is the irrepressible desire of the *Āḷvār-nāyāki* to achieve union with '*Nārāyaṇa*' (the third word used in the *Tirumantiram*) in all the aspects of His glory and splendour, which will not brook any restraint or delay.[40]

Sexual impulses and sexual desires could be admitted to exist in each living being in a mild form. Emotional feeling and surrendering to the Supreme Person could be taken to mark the feminine features. The mystic, though, to all intents and purposes, is a man, can feel like a bride to the husband, his Lord. How this transformation takes places in the mental set up requires to be clarified. This change takes place only in the mental plane and is free from carnality. The feminine aspect of this mental attitude is not inborn, but is required to become so with due deference to the Lord who alone deserves to be the husband with unmistakably masculine character, ethical severity and all amiable qualities. The Lord is the husband and all beings are His spouses. On the reverse side, the women who beheld Draupadi bathing in the river were fascinated by her physical charm and experienced the feeling that they became men with reference to her.[41] Vālmīki describes Śrī Rāma as captivating the eyes and mind of men through the form and qualities. The external appearance of Śrī Rāma was so fascinating that men *(purūṣām)* got much attracted to him.[42] This means that their looks were lost to His beauty which shows that masculine hand-someness made men subdued to it, making them feel as spouses to him. The qualities of Śrī Rāma were so exalted that ideationally, the men became mystics.[43]

---

40. A.H. Sūt 133. (Vide Maṇavāḷamāmunikaḷ's Commentary). The commentator brings out beautifully the three different states of mental consciousness.
41. cf. *Subhasitavali* v. 1559; cf. *Drāmidōpaniṣadtātparyaratnāvaḷi*. 3.
42. cf. K.R. Pala. Tāṭakaivatai. 32; ibid. Āraṇya. cūrpaṇakai. 59.
43. Rām. Adyodhya. 3 : 29.

Such transformations become possible with the result that mentally the mystic becomes a female, not being alive to his masculine body. It is because of this that the mystics, though they are men, refer, as women would do, to the parts of the body of women such as breasts.[44] This makes clear that transformation is complete. It is needless to take such references as having secondary sense, for the mystic is not aware of it. Once the primary sense is denied, suggesting an indirect reference *(anyāpadeśa)* as some commentators[45] on the *Tiruvāymoḻi* do, the whole structure of the bridal mysticism falls down. There is sensuous element in the utterances of these people who are not aware of it as such, for if they were, they would not have communion with God. In order to find the full charm in the presentation of the aspects of bridal mysticism, it is necessary to maintain the primary sense of these expressions.

The whole of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* is the presentation by Nammāḻvār of his God-experience. Twenty-seven decads of this work contain the vivid expression of the Āḻvār's experience as the bride of the Lord. The Āḻvār was in the state of trance for several years[46] and the result of this experience is contained here. During the milder stages of mystic experiences, the Āḻvār is continually conscious of his disappointments in being unable to have union with the Lord. A rather continuous, rhapsodical outpouring of the heart surcharged with feeling would be tedious from the artistic side of the composition. In order to avoid such a monotony, the Āḻvār seems to have hit upon a plan for treatment. He himself gives expression to his love as the bride in seventeen decads.[47] The bride, whose passion gets beyond control, may not be able to control it and may also be exposed to the public through her abnormal and unwomanly behaviour. The mother of the bride is therefore interested in keeping her

---

44. T.V.R. 52, 60.
45. *Divyārtta Dīpikai*: Introduction to *Tiruviruttam*
46. The period was 16 years. (D.S.C. 4 : 44).
47. T.V.M. 1.4; 2.1; 4.8; 5.3; 5.4; 5.5; 5.9; 6.1; 6.2; 6.8; 7.3; 7.7; 8.2; 9.5; 9.7; 9.9; 10.3.

daughter within reasonable limits of conduct. The one aim of hers is to see that her daughter is made to get married to the proper man and make her lead a happy conjugal life. Therefore she tells her visitors and friends that none but the Lord whom her daughter loves could afford relief to the sufferings of her daughter. There are seven decads of this kind in the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[48] The maid-companion of the bride also shows her interest in her welfare and speaks of the means to get her friend united with her husband.[49] This is dealt with in three decads.[50] One of the three decads occurs in the fourth centum, where the nature of the self as the *śeṣa* of the Lord is depicted, another in the sixth centum which is devoted to treat the means of getting at the Lord and the third one in the eighth centum wherein the result of the means, namely, God-experience is dealt with. The companion is thus shown to be helpful to the bride. The mother's feelings about the well-being of the daughter are well placed in the second centum where the nature of the Lord is treated, in the fourth which shows the attitude of the self to the Lord, in the sixth where anxieties and sympathies for the adoption of the proper course to get at the Lord are dealt with and in the seventh where the goal to be achieved is treated. Such a treatment fulfils an artistic effect by relieving the monotony of the narration and also shows that the introduction of the mother and companion serve two specific purposes. The first purpose is that these two do not play any role as in the melodrama but are, in virtue of their personal relationship to the bride, shown to reveal their abiding affection for her and the keen interest to see her united to her husband. The other purpose lies in the choice of woman as showing their interest in her welfare and giving expression to their cares and anxieties about her. Had even only one male member been shown as having spoken about the condition of the love-lorn bride, the charm of the entire composition would have been thrown into winds. While

---

48. ibid. 2.4; 4.2; 4.4; 5.6; 6.6; 6.7; 7.2.
49. This character is introduced in *Akam* poems to cut short the furtive course of the lovers and induce them to get married as early as possible.
50. T.V.M. 4.6; 6.5; 8.9.

it is admitted that all the souls are only brides for the Lord, yet there is more tenderness in the feelings when they are depicted as exhibited by the women-folk under the extreme stress of love in separation. Though the Āḷvār is only a male mystic, he had rightly chosen the mother and the maid-companion of the bride,[51] who could better represent the mental agony of a woman in suffering than a male member.

The irrepressible love of the mystic is closely associated with the physical form of God, whether it is in the supreme form *(para)* or descent *(avatāra)* or the indweller *(antaryāmin)* or *arcā* (idol). The lady in love gets fascinated by the figure which she recapitulates by representing or referring to any incident or episode of the Lord in one or more of His descents or in temples. At times, a synthesis is effected by treating more than one of such forms as being of equal appeal. Of the twenty-seven decads which treat of bridal mysticism, nine decads[52] and three verses[53] in a decad are mainly intended to show that the Āḷvār was uncontrollably passionate in his love for the *arcā* forms of the Lord. It is interesting to note that of these five occur in the fifth and the sixth centums which deal with the means of getting at the Lord, three find room in the seventh and eighth centums where the result of the endeavours is recounted and one occurs in the ninth centum which treats the obstructions that lie in the path of God-realization.

The *Tiruviruttam* of Nammāḷvār which contains a centum of verses presents the various aspects of the love which the Āḷvār has for the Lord. Ten verses[54] are sung by the Āḷvār himself in the form of an appeal to God for His grace, the first and the last being in the form of an introduction and conclusion respectively. The sufferings which the bride has to bear due to Nature and recollections of previous experiences in the company of her lover are recounted by the lady-

---

51. Following the tradition of the Caṅkam poetry of the Early Tamils.
52. T.V.M. 5.5; 5.9; 6.1; 6.5; 6.7; 7.2; 7.3; 8.9; 9.7.
53. ibid. 8.2 : 1, 4, 6.
54. T.V.R. 1, 21, 93 to 100.

in-love in fifty three verses.[55] An admirable artistic finish is revealed in the Āḻvār's efforts in presenting a friend of the Lord, the Lord Himself, the mother of the bride and the female-companion of the bride. The Lord is found, in the capacity of the lover, to express and depict certain situations to the bride and to His friend which takes nine verses.[56] Curiously enough, the friend of the Lord is shown to take some part and does not give utterance to any verse. The mother of the Lord, as any mother is wont to do, expresses her fears and anxieties for the well-being of her daughter for which the Āḻvār devotes six verses.[57] Nineteen verses[58] are devoted to showing how the female-companion advises the beloved to be calm and composed awaiting reunion with her Lord, occasionally expressing her disapproval of the Lord's attitude. The beautiful eyes of the bride are filled with tears which swell because of her unbearable separation from the Lord. The maid-companion wishes[59] that this plight shall continue for ever, thereby meaning that the severe longing for union with the Lord shall be aspired by a devotee, as otherwise, she could not be at ease in the atmosphere of the material world. In a verse the Āḻvār makes a person, not directly connected with any of the persons mentioned above, offer his remarks warning people against sensuous love[60] and describe the plight of the bride who pines in love-lorn condition.[61] An old lady, rich in her worldly experience, advises the people who suffer at the plight of the bride to bring in the things of the Lord, like the *tuḻaci* and use them for affording relief to the bride.[62] Tiruvaraṅkam,[63] Tiruvēṅkaṭam[64] and

55. ibid. 3, 4, 6, 8 to 14. 16 to 18, 25, 27 to 32, 35, 38 to 46, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 63, 64, 70 to 72, 74, 76 to 80, 82, 84 to 86, 88 to 92.
56. ibid. 23, 26, 50, 55, 57, 65 to 67, 75.
57. ibid. 19, 24, 37, 47, 59, 60.
58. ibid. 2, 5, 7, 15, 20, 22, 33, 34, 36, 52, 58, 61, 62. 68, 69, 73, 81, 83, 87.
59. ibid. 2
60. ibid. 6.
61. ibid. 9.
62. ibid. 53.
63. ibid. 28.
64. ibid. 26.

Tiruvehkā[65] are the only three shrines mentioned by the Āḷvār in this poem while giving expression to his love for God.

Bhagavat kāma as bridal love is different in kind from *viṣaya kāma* as *kāma* is really no middle term between the two. *Sṛṅgārarasa* or erotic joy is contrasted with *Brahmarasa* or the bliss of Brahman. The Āḷvār is free from the taint of *kāma* and carnality, but owing to his aesthetic bent of mind as a poet-mystic; he is specially susceptible even to the physical attractions of the Divine Enchanter, Kaṇṇaṉ, whose sole artf l design is to ravish the soul through every trace of fleshly feeling. It is in this context of poetic philosophy that the bridal mysticism of Nammāḷvār with his mystic instinct for the receptivity, responsiveness and mutualness of feminine love is to be understood and it is distinguishable from the merely poetic or philosophic experiences of other mystics.

The bridal mysticism portrays the union of the individual self with the Universal Self. The intensity of soul-hunger of God is greater than the God-hunger of the soul. The reciprocity of love leads to irresistibility by the mystic process of *saṁśleṣa* and *viśleṣa,* the systole-diastole movements of *premabhakti* or the devotion of love. In *viśleṣa* each moment stretches into eternity,[66] but in *saṁśleṣa* eternity is crowded into a moment. The former is the desolation of winter when the grace and glow of love fade away, and the bride pines away owing to the feeling of unrequited love and becomes pale and passive. The latter is the spring season when love blossoms and the soul is caught up to God and has a momentary joy of union or ecstasy. Thus while separation provides an opportunity to the bride to think of the perfections of the Lord or His infinite auspicious qualities and to arouse devotional ardour, union is the soulsight of His bewitching beauty followed by God-intoxication. This opposition is known as the mystic paradox, and its object is the transmutation of the earthly self into the godly by a process

65. ibid. 8.
66. T.V.M. 5.4: 3.

of spiritual alchemy. Like gold in the refiner's fire, the self is purified and deified by alternate depressions and exaltations. At one time it is thrilled by His touches; at another, it is torn away from Him and languishes. In mystic philosophy both are the essential elements of love and the dualism between the two is overcome by the attainment of unico-mystico or unitive consciousness. The bride passes through this process of union and separation till she becomes one with the Lover and enjoys the eternal bliss of such communion.

The bride, gifted with the highest imaginative art of lyric poesy, is blessed with the Beatific vision of the Lover and she sees Him face to face and is filled with rapture. She is immersed in the sea of delight and the whole soul and its overt sensation and form melt into the orison of love. The sense of separation is dissolved in the joy of the unitive life. The *Māyan̲* as the soul Enchanter enters into the inner being of the beloved and enjoys it as ever-creative '*ārāvamutu*'.[67] The Tamil word '*ārāvamutu*' is significant and sweet and is unique in mystic language. While the sense of enjoyment is exciting and exhausting, '*Ārāvamutu*', the joy of Divine contact, expresses the inexpressible joy which is satisfaction without satiety.[68] The bride feels that it is sweeter than honey and ambrosia.[69] She revels in the various exploits of Kṛṣṇa.[70] The thought of His accessibility or *saulabhya*, as expressed beautifully in the verse,[71] simply astonishes her and transports her to the point of a trance wherein she is lost. The unitive joy of *samśleṣa* exceeds all hedonistic joys even of heaven *(svarga)* and the peace of *kaivalya* which passes undersanding. Here there is no commerce with God or fear of hell as it is communion with the Inner Immortal Self of the self. The joy of *samśleṣa* overflows the inner springs and inundates the mind and the conative and cognitive sense organs. Rapture is the sudden onrush of joy and ecstasy is the temporary

67. ibid. 1.7 : 7; 1.8 : 5; 1.9 ; 5.8 : 10.
68. ibid. 2.3 : 1.
69. ibid. 1.6 : 6 ("*amutilum ar̲r̲a in̲iyan̲*").
70. ibid. 5.10.
71. ibid. 1.3 : 1.

suspension of the functioning sense-organs; but in both the cases, the self-feeling is swallowed up in joy. When Beauty rushes to the embrace of the beloved, the beloved expires in the arms of ecstasy.

To the lady in love-in-separation, as pointed out already, even a day in the union passes off like a moment and even a moment in separation is felt like a *yuga*. In the case of Nammāḷvār the joys of union with its visions and voices are only an intimation of eternal bliss and are not therefore enduring. But the *Māyaṉ* as the maker of souls seeks to turn the bride's vision inward by playing the game of hide and seek. *Viśleṣa* is spiritual purification as it is a process of negation; here *Bhagavat kāma* is purified by *vairāgya* or freeing the mind from every trace of sensuality; the renouncement by the self of the '*me*' and '*mine*' is, the *sine qua non* of spirituality; and self-love and sensuality are completely rooted out.[72] The spiritual quest for the Lord ripens now into the mystic thirst for Him. The woes and agonies of separation described in *Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Tiruviruttam* are unmatched in mystic literature for their moving power. In this mood the joy of orison is swept away abruptly and is followed by the Divine withdrawal and separation. It is the period of privation, blankness and despair. This mood may be psychologically analysed in general as the ascending stages of distress, depression, despondency and defiance with their own bodily expression and the psychic manifestation of thought, feeling and will.

The colour and glow and even grace of the bride fade away; life becomes dreary and desolate. The body loses its weight and bocomes a dead weight. She becomes very thin and her bracelets slip down. Her mother thus shows that she spends many a sleepless day and night and tears flow down her cheeks in torrential profusion.[73] There is tremor with trembling all over the body. Even the mind and the sense

---

72. ibid. 1.2 : 3. "*nīr numatu eṉṟu ivai vērmutal māyttu*".
73. ibid. 6.6 : 1, 2, 3; 7.2; 8.2 : 1, 3, 4, 6, 8.

organs pine away.[74] The bride sighs and sobs, weeps and wails, groans and cries in utter anguish. In his love-lorn stage, the Āḻvār fancies that some objects in the world have also a suffering similar to his and that too for the same reason, namely, separation from the Lord and yearning to have Him. The stark which does not sleep is white in complexion due to palor consequent on separation from the Lord.[75] The bird *kurari* (*anṟil*), which is also called *krauñca*, cries in distress, and this may be due to its desire to have the *tuḻaci* of the Lord.[76] The sea is restless both day and night, does not sleep and is reduced to the state of liquid on account of the longing to seek the feet of Śrī Rāma. May this sea become happy unlike her.[77] The wind which does not remain stable anywhere at any time moves through the sea, mountains and sky and must be feeling intense pain in the limbs while going in search of the Lord.[78] The cloud sheds tears in the form of rain as it is not in a position to be with the Lord. May it prosper with its sufferings removed.[79] The moon which is in the form of a crescent shows its state of waning as it is emaciated by its love for the Lord.[80] Darkness, which is not tolerated by the lovers, is fancied to be harassing the lovers. May it become freed of cruelty.[81] The canal, with its black waters, flows night and day, thereby showing its condition which has become miserable by its love for the Lord.[82] The lamp which is burning is considered to be heated by separation from the Lord.[83] The bride is not able to tolerate the roar of the sea. She fancies that the sea is angry against God who had churned it and extracted nectar from it. The sea likes to get it back, but being unable to

---

74. ibid. 3.8.
75. ibid. 2.1 : 1.
76. ibid. 2.1 : 2.
77. ibid. 2.1 : 3.
78. ibid. 2.1 : 4.
79. ibid. 2.1 : 5.
80. ibid. 2.1 : 6.
81. ibid. 2.1 : 7.
82. ibid. 2.1 : 8.
83. ibid. 2.1 : 9.

do so, turns its anger against the beloved of the Lord, for the reason that she has fascination for His *tuḷaci*. In order to take from her the bangles in her hands, the sea ebbs and challenges her.[84] The gentle wind carrying with it the fragrance of the jasmine flowers, the *kuṟiñci* type of music, the even-tide and red clouds, torment the bride and make her lose all hope of happy life.[85] The intense experience which she had is vividly described [86] Even at the time when the cows return from grazing fields she does not find any indication of getting at Him.[87] The gentle breeze brings with it the smoke of the fragrant aloe wood, the twang of the lute called *yāḻ*, the note '*p*'[88] (*pañcama*) and the cool sandal paste and wages war as it were with her weak person.[89] She could not stand the mellifluous notes of the flute when played by Him.[90] This decad[91] is brilliantly and artistically perfect in as much as it follows the previous decad which is devoted to sending a message to the Lord. The mind of the lady which is anxiously awaiting the Lord is not only disappointed but positively tortured by the many factors that influence the sensuous desire.

To the lady-love, the limbs cease to function followed by fainting and unconsciousness and the body remains like a log of wood. Oppressed by the thought of separateness, her mind is plunged into gloom and is emptied of all content resulting in the feeling of utter distress and agony. The will is completely paralysed and it becomes passive, impotent and inert. Spiritual distress, as we know, is more intense

---

84. T.V.R. 51.
85. T.V.M. 9.9: 1.
86. ibid. 9.9: 3.
87. ibid. 9.9: 5.
88. This is one of the seven notes in Indian music and it is held that it could inflame sensuous love.
89. T V.M. 9.9: 7, 8.
90. ibid. 9.9: 8. The Bhāg. P. (10.21) describes vividly how the *gopīs* became completely powerless on hearing Kṛṣṇa's playing the flute. cf. Periyāḻ. Tm. 3.6.
91. ibid. 9.9.

than what is expressed through the mind-body as it is soul-sickness leading to soul torture[92] The bride is over-powered by the sense of unworthiness and sinfulness which ends in remorse and prayer for forgiveness. Her lover overflows her inner being[93] and her spiritual cry assumes cosmic dimensions and is heard even in the world beyond the sphere of *samsāra*[94] By utter self-naughting and with the feeling of her nothingness, she surrenders herself to his mercy without any hedonistic or utilitarian considerations.[95] The *Māyaṉ* could not resist the call of love of His beloved and claim for reunion. Now again the *samśleṣa* follows and both the Lover and the beloved rush into the arms of each other and are lost in ecstasy. The rapture of communion overflows from the inner springs and inundates the senses. It is therefore more delightful than all the tastes, smells and sounds which have a sensory origin. Now her Kaṇṇaṉ again disappears.

This time the distress due to separation from her Lover deepens into depression bordering on despondency. The bride's self-feeling is wiped out and she drops into passivity by the growing feeling that she really has, does and is nothing The anguish due to sudden disappearance shakes the soul to its very depths and what is called dark night in the language of mysticism sets in. The shades of night fall fast and the world is wrapped in utter darkness and all persons sink into sleep. The bride alone is awake in the long awful night bemoaning her forlorn condition.[96] In a state of desperation she thinks of suicide like Sītā[97] in the *Aśoka Vana* and soon she recollects that she has no life or will of her own as the Lord alone is her life and sustenance. Kaṇṇaṉ is the food she eats, the water she drinks and the betel she chews; in other words, He alone is the source, sustenance, and satisfaction

92. ibid. 6.5.
93. ibid. 10.3:2.
94. ibid. 6.9: 7.6.
95. ibid. 6.10
96. ibid. 5.4: 1, 2.
97. ibid. 5.4: 3; cf. Rām. Sundara 25: 19.

of life (*dhāraka*, *poṣaka* and *bhōgya*).[98] But her soul-hunger and thirst are not satisfied by the cunning Kṛṣṇa. The game of hide and seek played by the *Muraḷi-dhara* can be known only by knowing the *Māyaṉ* or the player of the game.[99] The tormenter is, however, elusive as usual and the bride is unable to give vent to her state of torment. So she portrays the tragedy of love's labour lost dramatically in the guise of the mother, maid-companion and messengers.

In the words of the mother she sighs for Him day and night.[100] The loss of complexion of the bride afflicts her maid-companion who asks whether the Lord is justified in afflicting the beloved under the pretext of affording protection.[101] The maid-companion depicts the love-lorn condition of the bride to be beyond the scope of finding out remedies. Having lost herself to the Lord at Tolaivillimaṅkalam she is speechless and her intense suffering is revealed by her tears.[102]

The bride's maid-companion reports to the mother the details of her God-intoxication.[103] Her heart melts like wax and lac.[105] In her Divine madness, she embraces the burning wind and fire thinking that they are *parañcōtis* and seeks the sea as her blue-hued Lord.[105] Her similar behaviour is portrayed in this decad.[106]

The bride is described by her mother as talking about herself as having created the world which is surrounded by the seas, as having entered into it, as having received the world, as having lifted it up and as having kept it within herself. In other words, the bride feels the absence of the Lord

98. ibid. 6 7: 1.
99. ibid. 7. 5: 9.
100. ibid. 4.2
101. T.V.R. 33; cf.ibid. 62.
102. T.V.M. 6.5: 1.
103. ibid. 8.9.
104. ibid. 2.4: 3.
105. ibid. 4.4: 3.
106. ibid. 4.4.

and tries to maintain herself against this sudden affliction by trying to imitate the Lord's exploits.[107] She created the lores, showed them, kept them herself and is herself the essence of the lores.[108] She is herself the five elements,[109] the activities of all the three times, the enjoyer of such acts and the creator of those acts.[110] She protects the worlds, lifted up the Govardhana hill, killed the demons, protected the Pāṇḍavas and churned the ocean.[111] She herself did the feats of Kṛṣṇa.[112] She is herself the relation of every person[113] and herself every deity.[114] She is the dispenser of justic, and herself the primordial person.[115]

When the bride, who had on previous occasion the intense experience of the Lord, suffers and this incident of experience is not known to the mother of the bride. The mother apprehends the possession of evil spirit and calls the sorceress to find out the cause of her daughter's illness. The sorceress explains that an evil spirit had taken possession of the bride. The devil dancer is requested to perform the dance (which is known as '*veṛiyāṭṭu*' in Tamil Literature) for driving the evil spirit away. The mother is in a mood to consult the medical materialist thinking that her daughter's madness is due to hysteria or possession by evil spirits and seeks to remedy the disease by propitiating them with the offer of flesh and toddy. But the maid-companion advises her not to resort to such a method as the real malady is something different and the possible cure is to recite the praises of God or sprinkle the feet-dust of the God's devotees.[116] Spiritual malady can only be cured spiritually. Thereupon

---

107. ibid 5.6: 1; V.P. 5.13: 23: Bhāg. P. 10.30: 18 to 23.
108. ibid. 5.6: 2.
109. ibid. 5.6: 3.
110. ibid. 5.6: 4,
111. ibid. 5.6: 5.
112. ibid. 5.6: 6.
113. ibid. 5.6: 7.
114. ibid. 5.6: 8.
115. ibid. 5.6: 9, 10.
116. ibid. 4.6.

the maid-companion interferes and remarks that the sickness to the lady is concerned with her love for the Lord and is not in any way due to any evil spirit. She asks the devil dancer (*vēlan* as he is called) to stand aside and suggests to the women folk that the remedy that should be adopted is putting on the bride the *tuḷaci* uttering the names of the God while doing so.[117] This aspect of the description of the bride's suffering is called '*veṟivilakku*' in Tamil literature; the same is described in another verse[118] where the *tuḷaci* garland or *tuḷaci* leaves, or the *tuḷaci* twig or its root or the mud where it grows shall be placed on the suffering bride. The words '*conch*' and '*discus*' could be uttered into her ears to remove her illness.[119] Or, prayers in praise of the Lord's feet would be a suitable remeday to her malady.[120] They could also bow to the devotees of the Lord.[121]

When there is no response to her irrepressible and yearning love, the mood of the bride changes from despondency to defiance. Reaction soon sets in and passivity changes into an invading and assaulting mood. Love takes the offensive and becomes flaming and fierce, and, in the agony of disappointment and despair, the bride resolves to resort to the ultimatum '*maṭal ūrtal*'. She gives up all canons of her modesty and fear of public opinion and openly denounces Him for his cruel desertion, rebukes his cruelty and exposes his treachery.[122] When love's labour is lost, by not being responded to, its fierceness bursts all artificial bounds and the lover is publicly chid for his faithlessness. But her feminine love reasserts itself and the mood changes from reprisal to remorse and longing for reunion. Every trace of self-feeling or egoism is now uprooted. The bride is wearied of earthly life with its fleeting joys and woes. She spurns physical love as a perishing pleasure and a dream; she now

117. T.V.R. 20.
118. ibid. 53.
119. T.V.M. 4.6 : 2.
120. ibid. 4.6: 3, 9, 10.
121. ibid. 4.6 : 7.
122. ibid. 5.3.

longs for eternal bliss. The Lord of love seized with soul-madness enters into her whole being,[123] communicates His joy to her and makes her pulsate with joy. The joy of love's embrace is inescapable and irresistible and the bride is immersed in divine deliciousness and the thirst of ages is satisfied. The joy of unitive experience is not in the loss of personality but in personality. Sensation, form and self melt into Him, and finite thought expires in infinite bliss.

The bride gets estranged from the Lord and asks Him to give her back the balls and the pebbles with which she used to play and get away from her. She knows His selfishness.[124] The women like her get themselves lost to Him whose eyes and smile are bewitching. There are the women in Gokulam who could be fascinated by the sound of His flute, but this bride is no longer bound by His faithlessness. He may go away and play on the flute while tending the cows.[125] He need not any longer utter His false assurance to her. There may be other women who could listen to them. The bride at the same time feels her helpless lot and could not but express her admiration for those women who would enjoy His embrace.[126] Even the selves who are free from worldly life cannot know the tricks of Him who is asked by her not to utter any word to her.[127] He need not also exhibit His attachment to her brids such as *pūvai* and parrot.[128] He shall not keep with Him her playthings. His behaviour to them is childish. He need not force Himself to join the company of hers and her friends.[129] She warns Him that her elder brothers would give Him blows with stick, if they were to know His sports with her and deceitful utterances.[130] When she is called by her companions for sports, if He too were to

123. ibid. 2.5 : 2.
124. ibid. 6.2 : 1.
125. ibid. 6.2 : 2.
126. ibid. 6.2 : 3.
127. ibid 6.2 : 4.
128. ibid. 6.2 : 5.
129. ibid. 6.2 : 6.
130. ibid. 6.2 : 7.

present Himself amidst them unexpectedly, then those who do not approve His presence there would only blame her and her companions.[131] She and her friends, while they were playing, requested Him to take the food which they prepared. He came there and kicked off the food they cooked (just a piece of sport). He is not therefore known to have done her any helpful act.[132] The bride identifies herself with the cow-herdesses in Gokulam and refers to their lot which has been one of teasing at His hands.[133]

The bride finds it difficult to remain in her place with the experience of the Lord's presence within her. She expresses her resolve to proceed to Tiruppēreyil a place abounding in *Vedic* recitations and where the blue-complexioned Lord Kṛṣṇa dwells.[134] She could no longer remain bashful and control herself.[135] There is no purpose in her mother chastising her, as she is lost to Him in her admiration of His wondrous acts.[136] She requests the elderly ladies to take her there.[137] Her mind left her and had gone to that shrine and has not returned. As her mind could not be brought to her by any one, she chooses to go after it and reach that shrine.[138] All the women had scandalised her for loving the Lord. The bride tells her friend that she could not describe the intensity of her love She could only indicate its depth as pervading all the sky, the world and seven seas.[139] She asks the elderly women not to console her and comfort her to forget the Lord, as her mind and control of the self are not there with her and as such their efforts would not bring forth any result.[140] The Āḷvār, who is in the role of the bride, refers to his

131. ibid. 6.2: 8.
132. ibid. 6.2: 9.
133. ibid. 6.2: 10.
134. ibid. 7.3: 1, 2.
135. ibid. 7.3: 3.
136. ibid. 7.3: 4.
137. ibid. 7.3: 5, 6.
138. ibid. 7.3: 7.
139. ibid. 7.3: 8.
140. ibid. 7.3: 9.

having lost himself to the Lord several years ago. She would wander about the cities and countries in search of it. The intensity of her love for Him has made her deprived of the sense of bashfulness.[141]

Then the Lord presented Himself to her mind, remaining invisible to her physical vision. She is not able to bear the sight of His two eyes which pierce her and make the foundations of her existence shattered. She feels that the two eyes of the Lord are actually two causes to bring about the death of the women of her type. She is not also sure of their identity. The eyes present themselves in all directions as if there are the fresh blown lotuses.[142] His nose is so charming that it could be imagined to be the creeper of the divine desire-yielding tree. It is shining there as if it were an unchanging flame of a lamp.[143] The lips of the Lord appear to be unique kind of fruit. As she could not taste it then and there, she imagines that the lip could be the concrete form taken up by her sins. It can rather be treated as a fully developed place of coral. She could not decide its identity but could state definitely that His lip presents itself on every side wherever she turns and tortures her life.[144] Could these be the two blue-hued bows to bend and strike the women in order to attract them towards Him? Or, are these the Cupid's bow of sugarcane? They are the eye-brows of the Lord, the father of Cupid which are bent upon taking away her life.[145] Can this be the flesh of lightning which is but enduring with the red glow? Or, is this the cluster of pearls that slay her? Her life is tormented by the gentle smile of the Lord who lifted the Govardhana hill.[146] These are perhaps the sprouts of the shape of the fish, presenting themselves to women, and demons and suggesting that they could live on them. Ah! these are the Lord's ears with

141. ibid. 7.3: 10.
142. ibid. 7.7: 1.
143. ibid. 7.7: 2.
144. ibid. 7.7: 3.
145. ibid. 7.7: 4.
146. ibid. 7.7: 5.

crab-shaped ornaments that ceaselessly affect her life.[147] This is another aspect or thing which could not be presented to draw another's attention. It is perhaps the moon crescent in shape and so rising during the eighth night in the white fort-night. Or, it is the poisonous leaf for those who have become weakened with love. No, it is the forehead of the Lord which is affecting her soul to end her life.[148] These limbs which are peerless form His face and have taken away her life.[149] Here is the mass of threads blue in hue with darkness pervading the world rolled to form them. No, it is the lovely tresses of the Lord.[150] Her mind is captivated by the lustrous crown on His head and so she could not be dissuaded from loving Him. There was no purpose also in chastising her for beholding the Lord in the open.[151] The Lord who could not be visualised by any one including Brahmā, Śiva and Indra, presented Himself to the Āḻvār's mind whose description is called *uruveḻipāṭu* or *uruveḻittōṟṟam* (hallucination). A more impassioned depiction of the sight of the Lord is hardly found elsewhere except in another part of *Tiruvāymoḻi*.[152] While in one part[153] the auspicious form of the Lord is experienced by the bride filling up her mental vision, the other part[154] shows the same experience of the Lord in all His entirety of the infatuating limbs which the Āḻvār finds in the *arcā* form of the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi. Rather it could be said that the pleasant experience which was had through the *arcā* form whose worship falls in the fifth centum of the work is repeated as the result which is depicted in the seventh centum.

The bride refuses to be dissuaded by those who are interested in her welfare and her setting her mind on the

147. ibid. 7.7: 6.
148. ibid. 7.7: 7.
149. ibid. 7.7: 8.
150. ibid. 7.7: 9.
151. ibid. 7.7: 10.
152. ibid. 5.5.
153. ibid. 7.7.
154. ibid. 5.5.

Lord. She expresses her helpless condition by referring to the enchanting *arcā* forms at Tirumalai,[155] Peruṅkuḷam[156] and Tirukkuṭantai.[157] She is prepared to wait for any number of ages to get at Him.[158] At last, she states that her mind had reached His feet.[159]

A decad[160] in the eighth centum depicts how the bride is reported to her mother by her maid-companion to be uttering the name of the Lord in His *arcā* form in the shrine of Tiruppuliyūr at Kuṭṭanāṭu (Kerala State) and singing His praise. The bride's experience of this Lord is evident from her red lips. This decad has significance for the utterence of His names which a devotee is to repeat when he gets the vision of the Lord. Tiruvallavāḻ rich in the atmosphere of *Vedic* rites enthralled the *Āḻvār-nāyaki* who longs for the sight of the feet of the Lord[161] to wear on the head the dust of His feet,[162] to behold the nectar-like Lord[163] and to worship His feet,[164] or at least the flowers adorning them.[165] She is eager to worship Him [166] and utter His names[167]

The happy union with the Lord is not likely to last for the bride, as there are occasions when temptations would thwart the balance of her mind. The notes, cooings and shrieks of birds like female cuckoos, hens, *krauñca, pūvai,* parrots, bees and *tumpi* and cranes are likely, together with the blue clouds, to bring her out to the material world and

155. ibid. 8.2: 1.
156. ibid. 8.2: 4.
157. ibid. 8.2; 6.
158. ibid. 8.2: 7.
159. ibid. 8.2: 10.
160. ibid. 8.9.
161. ibid. 5.9: 1, 3, 6.
162. ibid. 5.9: 2.
163. ibid. 5.9: 5.
164. ibid. 5.9: 8.
165. ibid. 5.9: 7.
166. ibid. 5.9: 9.
167. ibid. 5.9: 10.

make her suffer. These are the factors that obstruct the life of a devotee who enjoys God's presence. The bride does not have any attraction for them as she had before having union with the Lord. She carefully avoids such distractions by recalling the happy time she had in His company and by recognizing that she had become His object and so could not deflect from such noble thoughts that fill her.[168] It is but fitting that the bride's thoughts of this kind should be depicted in the ninth centum which deals with the factors that prevent the devotee from getting at the Lord.

The bride is unable to bear the separation from Him who had gone out tending the cows and the time of His departure from her place is indicated by the chirpings of *koels*, peacocks and other birds. She finds it difficult to spend the day time without Him and so calls Him as relentless.[169] She who had the intense delectable experience of having a slight embrace with Him realized that this was only a dream experience. The agony cuts the vitals of her body. She therefore asks Him not to follow the cows for tending.[170] She could not contain herself while recalling the sweet nectar-like utterances of the Lord[171] The evening time had arrived wafting the fragrance of the fresh-blossomed jasmine flowers. She yearns to have the embrace with His chest shining with the lustre of the *kaustubha*. She desires to taste His kiss and wants His tender hand placed on her head.[172] She shudders to think of the encounter He would have with the demons while in the forest.[173] She is not jealous of Kṛṣṇa enjoying the company of many beloveds She desires that He should not go to the forest to tend the cows.[174] This may appear to be unnatural and opposed to the feminine intolerance at the possibility of the husband's allowing a woman other than his

---

168. ibid. 9.5.
169. ibid. 10.3: 1.
170. ibid. 10.3: 2
171. ibid 10.3. 4.
172. ibid. 10.3: 5.
173. ibid. 10.3: 6.
174. ibid. 10.3: 9.

wife to share his love. This passage occurs in the concluding centum which deals with the factors that prevent the result from getting fructified and where the Āḻvār's experience of the Supreme Deity is depicted. The bridal aspect of the life of the mystic dominates this decad but yet is not altogether free from the undercurrent of the bride's being primarily a devotee of God. As a devotee, the Āḻvār should aspire to join the host of other devotees and enjoy the communion with the deity together with them. This enjoyment has some likenesses in the conjugal happiness but is not non-different from it. This reveals that the Āḻvār is not completly unaware of his identity, though he has then the mystic experience. This fact is confirmed by the last verse of a decad stating the result following from the recitation of the particular decad in question.

In the setting of a *kāvya*, the *Tiruviruttam* depicts the bride's love in separation. The rise of the moon creates a longing for the bride to have the company of the Lord and therefore becomes intolerable and as if this is not enough, the gentle and cool breeze blows aggravating the mental agony of the bride.[175] The night which takes the full sway over the world after sunset creates pitch darkness adding strength to the suffering of the bride in separation. The shriek of the *krauñca* bird and the roar of the waves of the sea kindle the passion of the bride and make her more miserable.[176] That the wind which is cool as it blows, is experienced by the bride as hot[177] and the same becomes bearable to her when she gets for her use the garland of *tuḻcci* which was worn by Him.[178] The mother of the bride is much worried as to what would happen to her daughter who takes the wind and moon as scattering the sparks of fire.[179] The same wind creates an agreeable and pleasant touch to the bride in the company of

---

175. T.V.R. 35; cf. ibid., 72
176. ibid. 87; cf.ibid. 62.
177. ibid. 5; cf. ibid. 41.
178. ibid, 27.
179. ibid. 47; The bed also is felt to be hot. cf. T.V.M. 9.9: 4.

the Lord.[180] The dark clouds roar from the sky as if asking whether there is any woman who could have self control. The mother of the bride feels her daughter's plight and wishes for the removal of her distress, particularly because the bride has become the target of public scandal upon her having given expression to her love for the Lord.[181]

From times immemorial, the lovers when they could not get at each other for some reason or other, used to send a message of their love to each other. There were more cases of men sending the message to their beloveds.[182] The service of Hanumān as a messenger and that of the swan in the case of Nala and Dhamayanti are too well known. Rukminī sent a delightful presentation of her love to Śrī Kṛṣṇa through a brahmin.[183] What is strikingly significant here is the nature of sending the massage. Epistles appear not to have been in much favour. Oral messages served the purpose.

Regarding the selection of the messenger, the lovers were not wise enough to find out in advance whether the particular messenger whom they had chosen would have the ability to deliver the message. For instance, the love-lorn *yakṣa* is made by Kālidāsa to select a cloud as his messenger to convey the tidings to his beloved far away at *Alakā* in the Himālayas. The poet himself discusses the propriety of such a selection and answers that the lovers in separation could not make a discriminate selection from among the animate and inanimate beings. Such an explanation was not found convincing to the poets of the later age. However, it must be borne in mind that the lovers whose hearts are filled with the sorrowful feeling that they are suffering on account of the separation from their lovers usually fall into a reverie, a mental condition which is of absorbing interest. They are then alive only to the miserable plight in which either or both

180. ibid. 56.
181. ibid. 19.
182. The heroine sends a message to King Lakṣmaṇasena through the wind, as depicted in the Pavanadūta of Dhoyi (c. 1200 A.D.).
183. Bhāg. P. 10.52: 37 to 53.

of them are placed and are not aware of the correctness or otherwise of their undertakings in the external world. However, they are not forgetful of the roles which the messengers, whom they choose, have to play. For instance the *yakṣa* in the *Megadūta* is concerned with his eagerness to send a message and continues to touch upon the route in which the cloud should pass on its way to *Alakā* and how it should deliver the message to his beloved. Since it is the mental attitude that prompts the lover to send the message, the lover is not prepared to verify whether the message has been delivered nor does he wait for the delivery of the reply from his beloved. The lover is satisfied that the message has been sent and there was no need on his part to worry about any further.

The Āḻvārs also follow the same literary tradition in their poems.[184] The bride sends messages of her forlorn state to the beloved through the cloud, and birds like the swan and the cuckoo, the heron and the bee.[185] The sky has His blue colour. The bee drinks the Divine ambrosia. The cuckoo coos and woos Him. The parrot repeats His name. The skylark soars towards Heaven. The swans are spotless like lilies. Nature itself shines in His light and reflects His glory. They are thus fit to plead for her and say that her sin is not so sinful as to forfeit His mercy,[186] and that the lady-love (heroine) is mad after Him,[187] and that her life is His.[188] The *Nāyaki*, in her excessive God-intoxication,

---

184. According to a Tamil verse from *Irattiṉac-curukkam* swan, peacock, parrot, cloud, pūvai, maid-servant, *koel*, mind, breeze, bees are traditionally employed as messengers (vide: Introduction to *Pukaiyilai Viṭu Tūtu* (1939) edited by Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (Ed.). But the poets employ other species also according to their imagination. cf. T.L.K. 3.5 : 2.

185. T.V.M. 1.4; 6.1; 6.8; 9.7. These four decads according to A.H. (Sūt. 156) respectively contain messages to God in the forms of *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *paratva* and *antaryāmin*, and *arcā*.

186. ibid. 1.4.

187. ibid. 6.1.

188. ibid. 4.5.

imitates Him with all His cosmic glory (manifestation) and power (*śakti*).[189] The bees are chosen by the Āḷvār in his love for the Lord as the messengers, because they are more likely than others, to get attracted to the flowers adorning the Lord's feet or to the feet themselves as they appear like lotuses. The rather fast-flapping wings would carry them to the Lord at the shortest time possible when they start to go to the Lord. They are requested by the bride to all the words composing the message in order to convince her about the accuracy of the expressions.[190]

It is significant to find that Nammāḷvār begins his bridal mystic experience with sending a message to the Lord. The cranes, which are white in colour, feed the young ones searching for food from early dawn, and fly in the sky and so are chosen here as the messenger.[191] The bride asks the bird to be her messenger and if it is taken up and put in the cage by the Lord, as Naḷa tried to do,[192] the bird must consider itself to be fortunate to be with the Lord.[193] The *koels* which could utter some sweet expressions are then addressed.[194] The swan, which is happy with its consort, is asked to go to the Lord and tell Him of her condition.[195] The *krauñca* is asked to tell Him that she would be deprived of her life because of Him.[196] The heron,[197] the bee,[198] and the parrot[199] are then addressed in almost a similar strain. The small bird called '*pūvai*' did not convey the message and therefore is asked by the lady to go away from her.[200] If the wind

189. ibid. 5.6; cf. Bh.G. 10: 19 to 42.
190. T.V.R. 54.
191. T.V.M. 1.4: 1.
192. Naiṣadhīya Caritam. 1: 124. 125.
193. T.V.M. 1.4: 1.
194. ibid. 1.4: 2; cf. Peri Tm. 5.3: 4; T.V.M. 6.1: 6; Nāc. Tm. 5: 1.
195. ibid. 1.4: 3.
196. ibid. 1.4: 4.
197. ibid. 1.4: 5.
198. ibid. 1.4: 6.
199. ibid. 1.4: 7.
200. ibid. 1.4: 8.

does not find it convenient to be the messenger, it is asked to do away with her life.[201] At last, the mind is asked to be the messenger and convey her misery and remain with Him for ever.[202] The *Āḻvār-nāyaki*, while adopting the means to get at the Lord at Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, asks the cranes to make clear to Him her earnestness to be with Him.[203] The stork, the swan, the *koel*, the parrot, the *pūvai*, the bee and the host of other birds are all addressed to proceed to the Lord and tell Him that she is one among the many whom He has to protect.[204]

There are other aspects which are of interest in the matter of the lover's sending messages. The mind was taken to be innocent, and as belonging to oneself and therefore sent to Him. It is still roaming about God and has not returned to the bride with any news from Him.[205] The swans and the herons are chid by the bride for not having gone to the Lord.[206] The male swans are spending their time in the company of the female ones without taking the message of the bride to the Lord and they do not show any sympathy for the woman in suffering.[207] The clouds too which proceed towards the Tirumalai hills do not oblige the bride.[208]

It is not correct to hold[209] that the bride sent messengers to the Lord in His *vyūha*,[210] *vibhava*,[211] *paratva* and *antar-*

201. ibid. 1.4: 9.
202. ibid. 1.4: 10.
203. ibid. 6.1: 1.
204. ibid. 6.1: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10. The doves are also included. ibid. 6.8: 7; the clouds too are sent to the Lord at Tirumuḻikkaḷam. ibid. 9.7: 4,5.
205. T.V.R. 46.
206. ibid. 30.
207. ibid. 29. There is a similar description in Act IV of Kālidāsa's Vikramorvasiya where Purūruvas gets disappointed not being able to get any tidings of his beloved.
208. ibid. 31.
209. *Divyārta Dīpikai* on T.V.M. 1.4: 1 (following the tradition of A.H.).
210. T.V.M. 1.4.
211. ibid. 6.1.

yāmin,[213] and *arcā*[212] forms of God. The decad 1.4 of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* does not contain any reference to the *vyūha* aspect of God. On the contrary, it contains a reference to the *vibhava* aspect[214] The decad 6.1 is mainly devoted to the *arcā* form, with a significance to the *vibhava* aspect.[215] The decad 6.8 refers to *vibhava* [216] and contains no reference to *antaryāmin*. The decad 9.7 does contain main references to the *arcā* form and makes a single reference to the *vibhava*[217] form and in this respect, it is not different from the decad 6.1. In this context it is better to bear in mind that Nammāḻvār begins *Tiruvāymoḻi*, his *magnum opus*, with reference to the *para* form of God. Though the *arcā* form gets a special treatment at his hands, he treated all the forms alike and evolved a synthetic view of them and as such the *para* aspect is referred to in all the four decads under reference. Rather it must be admitted that *para*, *vibhava* and *arcā* forms get treated in these decads among which two[218] were mainly intended to treat the *arcā* form.

Bridal mysticism is thus a mental process which transports the mystics of either sex to a plane above the physical one, where the feminine features of enthusiastic surrender and passivity dominate without reference, however, to the external bodily features of the female sex. Love for God is akin to the love which a woman has for her choice among men *(puruṣa)*, with the shift of accent to *Puruṣottama*. *Puruṣas* are many and so each has a beloved but *Puruṣottama* is only one and it is but natural that others, who are different from Him, should be His beloveds. Carnality is not completely overcome in conjugal bliss at the human level while it finds no place in divine love. Therefore both men and women are divested of their awareness of their bodily features denoting

212. ibid. 6.8.
213. ibid. 9.7.
214. ibid. 1.4: 3.
215. ibid. 6.1: 10.
216. ibid. 6.8: 3, 7, 9.
217. ibid. 9.7: 1.
218. ibid. 6.1; 9.7.

sex and have only the feminine tendencies as far as love is concerned. Single-centredness in love, pining away in the absence of the husband, intensive emotional feeling and silent resignation to the circumstantial powers mark out feminine love of a woman and in the higher degree determine the love of God. There is rather nothing like love of manly nature. There is passion of the overbearing type accompanied by resoluteness and violence to bring everything under subjection and this is the masculine trait of love which lacks in emotional feeling. Devotion is emotional and also must be treated as feminine. It is therefore that through this aspect of mysticism that a poet-devotee finds better scope to give vent to his feelings of passion and love for God than in the prosaic form of poetry.

Chapter XXI

THE WORSHIP OF THE DEITY

Mystic experience is not the only kind of religious experience. The intense kind of that experience does not last for long duration of time. Intensity or reverse of it, which characterizes the religious experience, is not acquired by the mystic through conscious efforts nor does it admit of development through practice and training. It is a gift from God and the mystic is to remain only awaiting for receiving it. Such being the case, the mystic has more occasions when he is aware of the stormy and disturbing world. The experience which he undergoes creates on occasions, when he is without it, a passionate longing to have it again. Mindful as he is of his inability to work for it, he feels the imperative need to pray and request for God's grace. The unscaleable dizzy heights of the Godhead and the ineffective and inefficient lowliness of the self reveal to the mystic that the flow of the Divine Grace has always a downward motion to inundate the rather uneven human frailities and relieve the selves of the parching of life here. He cannot on account of his natural incapacity raise himself up even to make an effort to go half way and receive the benign favour. He is not however forbidden from taking to such methods, which lie within his limits and power, to work for deserving Divine Grace.

The efforts of God-realization though of temporary duration are seen in the abolition of personal conciousness and in the realization that there is a Personality much vaster and much more powerful than his own. Any action that is to be undertaken or carried out by the individual is the action of God Himself prompted and accomplished by Him. The self is no longer desirous of any objective. It feels energetic and enthusiastic about life and life's purpose. It is rid of

the sense of possession and egoism.[1] In the most ideal spirit of God–intoxication, Nammāḷvār asks people to give up the possessive and egoistic attitudes. "Reach the Lord", he says, "tearing of the roots of the attitudes of '*You*' and '*Your*' ".[2] The mystic saint should have perforce used the words '*I*' and '*Mine*' which stand for *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*. He tries to avoid using them, as it would smack of himself becoming guilty of having such attitudes. Hence he carefully worded the expressions as '*You*' and '*Your*'. If '*I*' and '*You*' and '*Mine*' and '*Your*' are combined togther as fit to be shunned, it is easy to understand that this leads to the realization that as there is nothing as '*Mine*' or '*Your*', everything must belong to Him and not to him or them. As '*I*' and '*You*' are required to be suppressed, He alone remains in the world. So much so, this concept is helpful to realize the ultimate tenet of the Vaiṣṇavite school that everything including '*I*' and '*You*' and therefore '*He*' or '*She*' or '*It*' also should belong to Him. This shows further that every being animate or otherwise exists only for Him and so deserves the name *śeṣa* while He is *śeṣin*.

Every thought, word, or deed that is undertaken by a being is really prompted by God and belongs to Him, the self being only a medium for that thought, word or deed concerned. The responsibility for this therefore rests with God and the self which realizes this is actually not afraid of anything nor is it overburdened by anything. The self cannot therefore operate its senses on anything for deriving personal gratification. Hence the need to control the senses.[3] This is the surest method for self-renounciation by the self. The difficulty in controlling the senses which drag the self as they choose points to the lowliness of human effort and to the need to practise humility, leaving one's self to the care of the Lord who alone could bring those senses under control. The desire for the sense objects and their transient pleasures are the root causes for *karma* in action. *Viśaya kāma* is the

1. cf. *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 436 – 7.
2. T.V.M. 1.2: 3.
3. ibid. 2.8: 4: M.Tv. 50.

desire for the object of senses, and its satisfaction is momentary and fraught with pain in all its stages namely originating in pain, mixed with pain, and causing pain. The primary cause of suffering is traceable to the desire for the objects of sense. While the moth, the deer, the elephant, the fish and the bee are drawn to death in the act of gratifying a single sense organ, man is allured by the cumulative charm and solicitation of the five senses and suffers physical and moral death.[3a]

Nammāḷvār laments variously the hold of the five senses over him and pleads to God for an escape from it. He cries: "How long will You immerse wretched me in the petty pleasures of the five senses?"[4] "Why should You still propose to keep me away from Your Lotus-Feet with the five senses within wearing me away?"[5] Again he refers to these senses as: "Made to struggle day and night with the rival onslaughts of the tyrants (of the five senses) ruling over me;"[6] "overwhelming and blinding me to Truth through five senses;"[7] "milling me in the disease of the five senses without prospect of cure;"[8] "the five senses which enslave even the Eternals *(nityasūris)*";[9] "the five senses which can never be set at rest;"[10] and "the five senses which entice every one as though they are nectar."[11] In fact the whole hymn is on the interplay of senses; finally the Āḷvār prays to Him to grant freedom from the illusion of the five senses and the meditation of His symbol and form. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār also decries the role of five senses in him. "I have sought refuge in Thee" says the Āḷvār, "for the five senses press me hard constantly."[12] He

3(a). *Tiruveṅkaṭak-kalampakam*-27.
4. T.V.M. 6.9:
5. ibid. 7.1: 1.
6. ibid. 7.1: 2, 3.
7. ibid. 7.1: 4.
8. ibid. 7.1: 5.
9. ibid. 7.1: 6.
10. ibid. 7.1:7.
11, ibid. 7.1:8.
12 Peri. Tm. 7.7: 1.

again says; "While the senses have planted themselves in me to give me worldly pleasures, I reject them and seek Thy protection from them;"[13] "the five senses harass me and spoil my soul; despite my determination for endurance, unable to withstand the senses, I reach Thee for rescue;"[14] " the five senses like fierce and strong youths hold me from Thee; I have escaped their guard and reached Thy feet for deliverance"[15] and "lords over me, the five senses having fixed their abode within me, pester me for their gratification and will not leave me. I cannot withstand them. At a loss as to what to do, I pray that Thou takest pity on me and relieve me."[16] Thus from the cradle to the grave life therefore is a will-o'-the wisp. When destiny drags the *jīva* down and subjects it to sorrow, the inner divinity in each *jīva* urges it to choose the way of blessedness, and it drifts between destiny and divinity till it decides on *mukti* and becomes a seeker after salvation.

Like all the poets who preface their works with an expression of their unworthiness to deal with the themes taken up by them, Nammāḷvār also does the same. But in his case it is not mere conventionality, but springs from a real and deep consciousness of his unworthiness to talk about God. For in him is seen this expression of humility being perceivable throughout all his four poems. The Lord is everything and beyond everything and hence arises the difficulty in calling Him by any definite name.[17] It is equally difficult to name Him as having particular enchanting limbs or possessions. The *Upaniṣads* rightly refrained from describing Him, as He is beyond the reach of words and thought. Nammāḷvār's treatment of this matter in the decad under reference is a clear confession of his inability to describe the incomprehensible nature of the Lord. The greatness of the Lord is so impeccable that it would be tarnished if even

---

13. ibid. 7.7: 3.
14. ibid. 7.7: 7.
15. ibid. 7.7: 8.
16. ibid. 7.7: 9.
17. T.V.M. 3.4.

gods and sages were to worship Him with flowers in their hands[18]. To extol Him is definitely an impossibility, for there is no object that could bear any likeness to any part of His body or aspect of greatness nor could the expressions be of any use.[19] All the available literature have only dealt with His greatness only to a limited extent.[20] The Āḷvār appears to convey here that the disparsity between the dizzy heights of His excellence and the depths of human frailities is so vast that attempt to praise Him or describe Him would rather belittle His greatness and would be an apology for praising Him.[21] His first poem *Tiruviruttam* begins in a plaintive and humble mood by making a submissive appeal to the Lord. Again and again in the course of that poem the saint is assailed by a feeling of unworthiness born of a realization of his smallness. In moving words he says: "Only great orthodox people (*vaidikas*) can truly claim to bow in all humility before Thy dark body and lotus eyes. Therefore, they alone are fit to talk about Thee. But here I am trying to sing about Thee. Shall I tell Thee what it is like? A vast herd of cows is being taken towards pasture-fields far away from the village. When, after going a long away, tempting and rich green grass is sighted, all the cows in the herd send forth sounds of joy. In their midst, however, is a blind cow which cannot see for itself those green pasture-fields that have been sighted by the rest. Neverthless, along with them, the blind cow also bellows in unison. In such a manner I also speak of Thee. What else can I say?"[22] In another verse he refers to the great skill with which Tirumāl (*Śrīyahpati*) gets Himself sung by one like his own humble self. He compares himself to the tiny bacillus wallowing in a wound in a living body, - living, moving and having its entire existence there; how can it know of the entire world? The idea embodied here is that he too knows, and can know, nothing of God. But he is sure and certain that his words

---

18. ibid. 1.5: 2.
19. ibid. 3.1: 2, 3.
20. ibid. 3.1: 6.
21. ibid. 3.1: 7 to 9.
22. T.V.R. 94.

will command attention. Is it not, he asks, an ancient custom to attach significance even to the sounds made by a lizard?[23] In yet another verse the Āḷvār says that his learning the names of the Lord (*Tirunāmac-col*) is like taking a bite out of an unripe fruit for want of a good ripe one. For, according to him, only the celestials of the earth (*nitaḷ-tēvar*) can claim to pay their obeisance to God in the hallowed words of the *Vedas* (*irukkārmoḷi*).[24]

In the Āḷvār's second poem, *Tiruvāciriyam*, the same sentiment is reflected in one verse, as its central idea: "Is it possible for me to worship those highly exalted Feet of the Lord - of that great God of *māya* (wonder)?"[25] The underlying idea is that those Great Feet are beyond his worship.

The Āḷvār's third poem, *Periya - tiruvantāti*, starts with an apology. The second verse can be set out in full for our consideration here:

"Pukaḷvōm paḷippōm; pukaḷōm paḷiyōm;
Ikaḷvōm matippōm; matiyōm ikaḷōm; maṟṟu
Eṅkaḷmāl! ceṅkaṇmāl! cīṟalnī; tīviṉaiyōm
Eṅkaḷmāl kaṇṭāy ivai."[26]

'Our praise of Thee amountst to dispraise, nay, even abuse. As long as we do not attempt to praise Thee, we at least have the satisfaction that we have not defamed Thee. If we demean Thee, it is really respecting Thee. If we do not pretend to respect Thee, it at least ensures that we do not demean Thee. Our own Lord of Love! O Lord with lotus-like eyes! kindly do not get angry. These are all the love-antics of ours, - sinners we are of the worst type'. In a paradoxical tone, the Āḷvār talks in a wonderful strain

---

23. ibid. 48.
24. ibid. 64. The phrase '*irukkārmoḷi*' means the hymn of the *Ṛg. Veda*. cf. Tc.V. 109; cf T.V.M. 4.3 : 9.
25. T.V.C. 4.
26. P.Tv. 2.

of the wide disparity between the object of the praise on the one hand, and the person who seeks to praise, on the other; The plural "*we*" in this verse signifies the unworthiness of mankind as a whole and not himself alone. Barring those who never care to utter one word of praise on or worship of, God, the saint thinks of the rest of mankind, and on their behalf, submits to the Lord how He transcends words and is beyond praise. The tone of apology in 'Please do not get angry with us, because we indulge in such behaviour' is noteworthy. And he seeks to justify the lapse by referring to the love that impels men to take to praising Him. As he sings seven more verses, this feeling of unworthiness overtakes him again[27] and in the next verse he addresses his mind and asks "who are we and where is worship of Tirumāl"?[28] He prefaces this by saying that possibly the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, and the great Two (out of the Trinity, Brahmā and Śiva) may claim to worship Him. "Alas" concludes the Āḷvār, "we have to our credit only immense faults." There are other verses in this poem disclosing a similar frame of mind.[29]

The last poem, *Tiruvāymoḷi*, is a work of mature wisdom where is found this sentiment gathering greater momentum and is being expressed in several ways. In one hymn the Āḷvār thinks of the superiority and transcendence of the Lord, and in a fit of depression at the thought of his lowliness as against His greatness he seeks to run away from Him. There he sings: "I of very small intellect hanker to see Him who cannot be known by any one...... Can there be a greater folly than this?"[30] Unfitness to sing of Him is gradually disclosed to be only a corollary to the appreciation of the Lord's unsurpassed greatness, which is far above human ken. Similar sentiments are voiced forth by the Āḷvār: "I cannot find adequate and suitable words to describe Him";[31] "Is it possible to study the glory of the

27. ibid. 9.
28. ibid. 10.
29. ibid. 16, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 33, 71, 76, 82.
30. T V.M. 1.5: 7.
31. ibid. 2.5: 8.

lion-shaped Lord ?"[32] Finally the Āḷvār says that the Lord has made him a medium to sing Himself; it is He that praised Himself with His own words. In the Āḷvār's own words: "God has made me a tool to sing the *Tamil Prabandham* in order to make known what even the *Vedas* have not unravelled;[33] the *Prabandham* of my own words and of my authorship is made popular by His efforts and by seeking a place in me, He has sung about Himself;[34] taking possession of my mind and investing me with clarity about Himself (as the Supreme God) He strung garlands of verses from my tongue and sang about Himself;[35] not being gifted with the ability to sing sweetly of His divinity, He took possession of a person most incompetent like me blessed me and through my agency had the sweet hymns praised all over the world sung about Himself;[36] the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha without getting the foremost poet of sweet expressions[37] to sing about Himself, reserving all the blessings for me, through me sings the best verses about Himself;[38] one most incapable like me has been made his equal, and rendered capable of singing all about Himself;[39] I had nothing to forget because I had nothing to remember and taking possession of me, He made me

---

32. ibid. 2.8: 9.
33. ibid. 7.9: 1.
34. ibid. 7.9: 2.
35. ibid. 7.9: 3.
36. ibid. 7.9: 5.
37. cf. *Divyartha Dipikai on this:* It is needless to take this as a reference to the first Āḷvārs. The word does not refer to the composers as having used Tamil for their compositions. Eminent poets like Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Parāsara were better equipped for singing the glory of God in well-chosen expressions. They could have been chosen by the Lord for composing songs in His praise. Perhaps, the Lord chose this Āḷvār to compose hymns in Tamil. Further there is objection to interpret this reference in favour of the first Āḷvārs; for there is no evidence, except the tradition *(aitihya)* prevalent in certain sections of the Vaiṣṇavite community, to prove that Nammāḷvār knew about the first Āḷvārs and their compositions.
38. ibid. 7.9: 6.
39. ibid. 7.9: 8.

inexhaustible in my utterances about Him;[40] in return for the gift of singing the *Tiruvāymoḷi* when my soul tries to find out what I can give back, the answer that I get is that even my soul is His. Therefore nothing can be too precious to be returned to Him."[41]

Similar sentiments have been expressed by the venerable saint in other places: "Having received the gift of performing consecrated service to Him, whatever may be exalted position as a result of His having taken possession of my most despicable body and given me the understanding about Himself, the joy that I would get by exhausting my hymns with the devotees of the Lord can bear no comparison to anything else;[42] having been chastened out of all *nirguṇas* I have been ordained to sing the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the food for the devotees of the Lord;[43] seeking a place in me and from there He performed the authorship of the great Tamil work, *Tiruvāymoḷi*;[44] He took possession of my mind and spirit even without the knowledge of His consort near Him and played the role of a poet incognito;[45] having destroyed the *aśuras* to the great joy of the *devas*, the devotees longing to know more about the Lord, He responded by His becoming myself and singing about Himself."[46] This is all a truly wonderful synthesis mingling in itself the humility of the Āḷvār, the unspeakable glory of God, His sport or *līlā* by which He enjoys Himself, and His grace with which He blesses His devotees.

The moments of disappointment created by the loss of God-realization oppress the Āḷvārs to such an extent that they do not find fault with God for their sufferings but prefer to condemn themselves as having committed sins and not

40. ibid. 7.9: 9.
41. ibid. 7.9: 10.
42. ibid. 8.10: 5.
43. ibid. 9.4: 9.
44. ibid. 10.6: 4.
45. ibid. 10.7: 1.
46. ibid. 10.7: 5.

refrained from such evil acts. In moments of self-condemnation Nammāḷvār, sometimes in desperate moods, cries out:

> "Kiṟpaṉ killēṉ eṉṟu ilaṉ muṉam nāḷāl
> Aṟpa cāraṅkaḷ avai cuvaittu akaṉṟoḷintēṉ"[47] –

'In the past I never enjoined on myself the task of doing good nor did I forbid doing evil. I had been involved in the most objectionable ways of life in utter disregard of Thy presence';

> "Mēvu taṉpa viṉaikaḷai viṭuttumilēṉ
> Ōvutal iṉṟi uṉ kaḷal vaṇaṅkiṟṟilēṉ"[48] –

'I had not absolved myself of sins capable of harm nor have I concentrated at the worship of Thy presence'. Speaking of the smallness of his being he says: 'I am a little man for the reason that I am devoid of anything good, but the sins that I have committed have made me notoriously big' – "cīlam illāc ciṟiyaṉēlum ceyviṉaiyō peritāl";[49] 'I am the most despicable of beings shameless for all my deeds. Of what avail will it be if I shout for Thy divine presence?' – "Nāṇam illāc ciṟutakaiyēṉ nāṉ iṅku alaṟṟuvatu eṉ?".[50] He further continues and reaches the climax of self-condemnation: 'I am the most obnoxious with no virtues to my credit' – "Nīcaṉēṉ niṟaivu oṉṟum ilēṉ".[51] About his omissions the Āḻvār confesses:

> "Iṭakillēṉ oṉṟu aṭṭakillēṉ aimpulaṉ vella killēṉ
> Kaṭavaṉ āki kālantōṟum pūp paṟittu ētta killēṉ"[52] –

'I have not done one act of charity; I have not even quenched the thirst of those who were thirsty; had I controlled my senses I would have at least set foot on *jñāna-yoga*; I have not even attempted that. With self-control if I had at least gathered flowers for worship at Thy feet I would at least have set foot on *bhakti-yoga*'; 'I had not done anything

---

47. T.V.M. 3.2: 6.
48. ibid. 3.2: 8.
49. ibid. 4.7: 1.
50. ibid. 4.7: 4.
51. ibid. 3.3: 4.
52. ibid. 4.7: 9.

capable of good nor had I engaged myself in achieving the finest wisdom' – "Nōṟṟa nōṉpu ilēṉ nuṇ aṟivu ilēṉ".[53] He confesses that he had been a pseudo-devotee: "I had falsely flattered Thy appellations as the possessor of discus and one with the complexion of the dark gem kindly disposed towards me; in this way I had wasted my time in ungodly ways".[54] About his pitiable condition he cries in agony: "koṭuviṉaiyēṉ"[55] – 'I am the most unfortunate'; "valviṉaiyēṉ"[56] – 'I am an irredeemable sinner'; "koṭiya valviṉaiyēṉ"[57] – 'I am the worst sinner' and so on. In one of his soul-stirring verses the Āḻvār bemoans his lot:

"Aṅkuṟṟēṉ allēṉ iṅkuṟṟēṉ allēṉ uṉṉaik
kāṇum avāvil vīḻntu nāṉ
Eṅkuṟṟēṉum allēṉ"[58]

– 'I am not of those chosen few up above (the Eternals), gifted to be with Thee and by Thy side for ever and ever; nor am I one of those who spend a happy contented life over here (the terrestrials), without any trouble or fear about a life or lives beyond Tormented by a passion to obtain a vision of Thee I am neither here, nor there, nor anywhere'. Even though such a matured and devout soul as Nammāḻvār has described his condition in the above words, the condition will truely describe the state of many here who have not the courage to be godly and strength of purpose to be saintly, but who at the same time are not thoughtless enough to mix freely with the world at large with all its temptations and allurements. Worldly-mindedness that has been with us for ages and the lives untold will not let go their ancient hold on us, and so the clinging to the flesh and all that the flesh is heir to, is present in us in a pronounced degree. At the same time, a little intellect, a few spiritual flashes vouchsafed to us now and then by a merciful God and an environ-

53. ibid. 5.7: 1; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 5, 8; T.M. 25, 26, 30, 31.
54. ibid. 5.1 : 1; T.M. 34.
55. ibid. 9.2 : 10.
56. ibid. 8.1 : 8.
57. ibid. 5.10 : 9.
58. ibid. 5.7 : 2.

ment of religiousness not entirely of our seeking, have worked serious havoc with our materialistic stability and equilibrium. And hence we are very often tossed between one extreme and another and as frequently deadened by a morbid feeling of inertia and helplessness.

Realization of *jiva's* lowliness incompetence and inefficiency to do what is good and to avert what is dangerous shows to the self that it is under the gentle control of the Lord who is ever ready to redress the miseries of the selves. It is beyond the normal ability of the self to carry out the *vedic* rites for purifying itself and to acquire the knowledge of reality. The only course open for the self is worship of the Lord. The word *'puja'* which is used in the sense of worshipping God conveys the meaning of regard with deep respect for the perfection of the Lord and affection for the Lord's qualities which are endearing and attractive to the self. The words *'bhajana'* and *'bhakti'* reveal the self's awareness and admiration for the Lord and His possession of perfection which is unattainable to any one and therefore the self's willingness to serve Him. The word *'service'* which is derived from the Latin cognate *'servus'* is closely connected in its import with the Sanskrit word *'sevā'*. In its primary sense, the word *'sevā'* means labour and in the religious sense, it means the willingness of the self to offer himself as a slave to God. Worship can also be taken to stand for penance through love. Worship entails certain observances which are like the rigours of penance. Besides pleasing the Lord, this leads to the purification of the self.

This process of spiritual purification or catharsis is spoken of as *'tavam'* or penance. *Tapas*, as Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār points out, is not merely torture of the body and the practice of austerity.[59] It has received its wider treatment in *Tirukkuṟaḷ* under the caption *'Tuṟavaṟam'* (ascetic virtue) which has been divided into two parts *viratam (tapas)* and *jñāṉam*. The spiritual progress is really a spiritual discipline which restrains the free license of the mind and utilises its

---

59. Peri. Tm. 3.2: 1.

energies in fruitful and spiritual channels. Tiruvaḷḷuvar calls this process '*tuṟavu*' in the sense of renunciation because there is renunciation of selfishness. One who has reached this stage must have developed the feeling of universal love or *aruḷ*, a child of *aṉpu*, the love with which a man starts his life's journey. "Place yourself in the place of others" says the immortal poet to explain that feeling of universal love. At this stage of human development there cannot be any longer the distinction between '*You*' and '*I*', the '*Mine*' and the '*Yours*'. The life of renunciation is really the renunciation of this duality. It is the full bloom of the personality without these restraints; *Tapas* consists here in putting up with all sufferings and proceeding to do good acts to help even the dumb beasts. Truth to such a man is the progressive driving out of all injury and misery, which is the expression of *aruḷ*. In the spiritual path one may have to undergo suffering, but that suffering augments the love and attenuates misery. It is this positive feeling which Tiruvaḷḷuvar expresses it in a negative way in terms of its effect: "*Uṟṟa nōy nōṟṟal uyirkku uṟukaṉ ceyyāmai, aṟṟē tavattiṟku uru*"[60]— 'the nature of religious discipline (*tapas*) consists, in the endurance (by the ascetic) of the sufferings which it brings on himself, and in abstaining from giving pain to others.' If the possitive aspect of *tapas* is forgotten and emphasis laid only on its negative element, it reduces to nothing more than self-torture; it cannot be called a mere discipline.

In the absence of intense and deep love, the *tapas* becomes cruel. *Bhakti* is for the sake of *bhakti* and it has its fruition in absolute self-surrender to Bhagavāṉ as the *upāya* or means and the *upēya* or goal. In other words in this path of love the means and the goal are nothing but Bhagavāṉ. The self enters the service of the Lord not owing to merely the attraction of His auspicious qualities but owing to its own real nature also. The devotee recognises God as his only Lord and serves His will, as such service is the only goal of religious experience and constitutes the highest joy of life. He longs to see the beauteous form of the Lord with

60. Kuṟaḷ-261.

the eye of the soul and hear the music of love with the spiritual ear. He does not seek any other fruits as gifts from God, but the Giver Himself. Periyāḷvār says: "Now that I have the austerity (*tapas*) of rendering service to Thee, it would be detraction from Thy glory, if I were hereafter to stand with bowed head in front of the house of any other. Kindly note."[61] The Āḷvār has also pointed out that there will be no activity for securing other things (*upādāna*): "I will not beg of Thee food for eating or cloth for wear."[62] Nammāḷvār will never adore any deity other than Bhagavāṉ even in his thoughts.[63] "My thoughts" says the saint again, "are never with any deity other than the Lord. The omniscient Lord is aware of this."[64] Poykaiyāḷvār says: "The mouth will never sing the praise of any one other than the Lord."[65]

The primary requisite for undertaking the act of worship is the purity of instrument (*karaṇa*) which is employed for the purpose. In the absence of purity, the act itself becomes insincere and also would be ostentatious. Worship is through all the *trikaraṇas* – body, speech and mind. Nammāḷvār says that he has dedicated his mind,[66] his speech[67] and his sensory organs[68] to the services of the Lord.[69] Those who keep the Lotus Feet of the Lord both on their lips and mind will be relieved of old age, birth and death.[70] Poykaiyāḷvār says: "My lips will not praise any one except the Lord; my mind will not render service to any one except Him; nor my ear will hear any body's

---

61. Periyāḷ. Tm, 5.3: 3.
62. ibid. 5.1: 4.
63. T.V.M. 4.6: 10.
64. ibid. 7.10: 10.
65. M.Tv. 11.
66. T.V.M. 3.8 : 1.
67. ibid. 3.8: 2.
68. ibid. 3.8: 3, 4, 5.
69. ibid. 6.5: 11.
70. ibid. 3.3: 9.

name except His",[71] and again "one with control of one's mind and with discriminate understanding of *Swāmi-Dāsa* relationship will be willingly inclined in search of God's Feet as a calf does in search of its mother cow." [72] Mind is much more important than the tongue and the body, for it is the mind that moves them. Nammāḷvār therefore advises us to devote our mind in worshipping the Lord day in and day out;[73] and that too with pure mind.[74] He is sure that the Lord who has taken His abode in his mind will not shift.[75] He refers to the devotees as those who contemplate the Light of light in their mind.[76] He affirms that his innermost recesses of the heart is enjoying His presence there to its full satisfaction.[77]

The *pūja* or worship by the devotees or the followers of God is referred to by the Āḷvārs as *pūcai* or *pūcaṉai.* Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār says :

> "Vācittum kēṭṭum vaṇaṅki vaḷipaṭṭum
> Pūcittum pōtu pōkkiṉēṉ"[78]

- 'I spent my time, reading (about Him), listening to (His praises and exploits), bowing (to Him), offering ritual worship and performing *pūja*'. This forms part of *caryāpāda.* The symbol, image or idol of God (*arcā*) is placed before the worshipper and God is felt or imagined to present Himself in that form. Usually that form is in human form with four arms with usual divine appurtenances made of stone or metal. Nammāḷvār envisions such a form of Deity at Tiruccenkuṉṟūr as occupying his mind and heart with every one of His limbs and organs.[79] In his opinion the only God who created

---

71. M.Tv. 11 cf. ibid. 63; again cf. Mū. Tv. 12.
72. M.Tv. 30; cf. ibid., 47.
73. T.V.M. 3.6: 3.
74. ibid. 3.6: 7.
75. ibid. 10.4: 5.
76. ibid 3.7: 6.
77. ibid. 9.4: 7.
78. Nāṉ. Tv. 63.
79. T.V.M. 8.4: 7.

the four-faced Brahmā in His naval in order to create the celestials and all other things deserves offerings of flowers and *pūja*.[80] Worship is done, besides praising the Lord and his greatness, offering flowers. There are several rules and regulations which speak of the kinds of flowers that are to be plucked and the time of getting them. Offering a flower is only the representation by the devotee of his giving away something which he has by nature or acquired through the rightful means. This is the convenient way in which the self could overcome the feeling of possession over objects which do not actually belong to it. This is figuratively depicted as of eight kinds, namely, non-injury (*ahimsa*), control over senses (*indriyanigraha*), sympathy for all beings (*sarvabhūtadayā*), forbearance (*kṣamā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), penance (*tapas*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and truth (*satya*). All these would please Viṣṇu. It means that when these are practised, the devout worshipper is taken to have adored Viṣṇu with flowers. Love for God is stated by Nammāḷvār to have been used by him to adorn the Feet of the Lord, perhaps meaning that it is the basis even for offering the eight kinds of flowers.[81] By worshipping the Lord with flowers, one gets rid of mental impurities, evils do not attend on him and he would also be materially prosperous.[82]

Offerings are made to the Lord in the image. Any leaf or flower and a handful of water is enough to please the Lord Who is hungering for the love of the souls.[83] The worshippers usually do not stop with the leaves and flowers. They offer the Lord incense, lamp and sandal paste. The poems of the Āḷvārs abound in descriptions of these things. Poykaiyāḷvār says: "Tiruvēṅkaṭam where converge discriminating and well-informed devotees from various directions every day bearing incense and lamp, flowers and holy water;"[84] "those who worship in strict accordance with the code the Lord with

80. ibid. 2.2: 4.
81. T.V.R. 2.
82. M.Tv. 43.
83. Bh. G. 9: 26.
84. M.Tv 37.

tulaci garland day in and day out;"[85] "devotees with offerings of flowers and holy water;"[86] "the thirty-three minor deities[87] daily resort to Tirumāl with parti-coloured flowers, chanting *puruṣa-sūkta*!"[88] "O mind! let us redeem ourselves, gathering flowers and holding up the incense in worship of our Lord."[89] Pūtattāḻvār also refers to these rituals of worship: "With fresh-picked flowers, and with a mind full of devotion;"[90] "with the tongue praising Thee and with flowers (for Thee) in hand;"[91] "those who offer worship at the Feet of the Lord daily with fragrant flowers praising Him as 'my Lord' and exulting that it is one's day to enjoy the auspicious presence of the Lord;"[92] "with incense and fragrant flowers, I worshipped Thy Feet which measured the three worlds;"[93] "at nightfall decorate the Feet of the lion-shaped Lord with flowers and at daybreak worship Him with folded hands, and emancipate yourself;"[94] "I saluted Thy auspicious form, and lovingly offered at Thy Fair Feet, with my own hands, beautiful lotus-flowers;"[95] "every morn, noon and evening, I shall with the offer of available flowers contemplate the thousand names of the Lord with the discriminating understanding;"[96] "it is proper for the devotee to celebrate the twin Feet of the Lord and to bow to them, having procured choice sandal paste, excellent ornaments, silken shawl, and highly fragrant white jasmine;"[97] "making

---

85. ibid. 26.
86. ibid. 43.
87. They are the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas and the twin Aśvinidēvatas.
88. M.Tv. 52.
89. ibid. 58.
90. I. Tv. 6.
91. ibid. 10.
92. ibid. 31.
93. ibid. 34.
94. ibid. 47.
95. ibid. 65.
96. ibid. 73.
97. ibid. 76.

contact with the Lord with fresh-blooming flowers;"[98] "and the Lord Who is surrounded by the celestials who offer fine flowers to Him standing in hierarchical order".[99] Pēyāḷvār too echoes the same details in his poem: "Those who are free from the darkness of ignorance and who fold their hands in worship offering fine flowers at the Feet of the Lord;"[100] "and the handsome Eternals who daily bow their heads and scatter fragrant flowers at His Feet."[101]

The great Bhaktisāra gives similar details regarding the nature of worship: "Worship Him with cool flowers, bending the head;"[102] "offering flowers at the Feet of the Lord who measured the earth and worshipping Him;"[103] "the four-faced god of the fragrant lotus and the three-eyed god constantly offer lotus-flowers at the Feet of the Lord and praise Him;"[104] "devotees of the Lord who present flowers with affection at His Lotus Feet and stand like the bare trunks of trees (whose branches have been lopped off)";[105] and "those who aspired to be stationed in Heaven and realized their aspiration are those who have offered various kinds of flowers at the Feet of the Lord".[106] According to the conception of this Āḷvār those devotees who offer lotus flowers at the Feet of the Lord are superior to the celestials like Brahmā and Śiva, the Eternals and all others.[107] The saint directs us to worship and praise Him with whatever flowers are available.[108]

---

98. ibid. 86.
99. ibid. 99.
100. Mū. Tv. 19.
101. ibid. 22.
102. Nāṉ. Tv. 11.
103. ibid. 15.
104. ibid. 42; cf. ibid., 82
105. ibid. 45.
106. ibid. 90.
107. ibid. 91.
108. ibid. 64; In this connection one is reminded of Paṭṭar pointing out to Nañcīyar in his explanation of the phrase 'purivatum pukai pūvē, (T.V.M. 1.6: 1) in the course of a discourse that only the flower with thorns (Kaṇṭakālip-pū) has been prohibited, that too

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's poems also contain these details: "Piriti (a place in Himālayas) where the celestials, having bathed in pools full of fine flowers, carrying flowers and chanting the thousand names of the Lord, offer worship to Him";[109] "our Lord who blesses those who offer choice flowers with devotion and seek relief from the clutches of Yama with fervour;"[110] "and the heart of myself who has been for long presenting various flowers at Thy Feet".[111] Kulacēkarāḷvār says: "Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, and the great ṛṣis and the divine damsels jostle each other and rush strewing flowers in all directions towards the Deity at Śrī Raṅgam".[112]

Poykaiyāḷvār directs the mind to attain the Feet of the Lord.[113] A devout worshipper cannot think of anything else.[114] The very purpose of having *Vedic* study is only to worship His Feet.[115] Performance of the sacred rites as per injunctions of the *Vedas*, acquisition of the knowledge of reality through the study of the *Vedas* and *Śāstras* and other activities which are based on the *Vedas* have only the direct results in these which in the long run should lead to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Besides bowing down to His Feet, one shall, according to Pēyāḷvār, greet the Feet.[116] The self shall be devoted to the Lord. It would be prudent on the part of the individual to be attached and devoted to the Lord's Feet which have more significance.[117] The self shall not at any time forget His Feet.[118] The Feet shall be adorned and worship-

not because the Lord does not accept it, but because the devotees' hands would be pricked by the thorns (vide *Ïṭṭiṉ Tamiḻākkam* Vol. I. 1.6: 1); cf. Peri. Tm. 11.7: 6.

109. Peri. Tm. 1.2: 7.
110. ibid. 2.4: 8.
111. ibid. 3.5: 5.
112. Perum. Tm. 1: 6.
113. M.Tv. 21; cf. Mū. Tv. 92.
114. ibid. 31.
115. ibid. 58.
116. Mū. Tv. 95.
117. ibid. 44; I. Tv. 80.
118. I. Tv. 41.

ped.[119] One whole decad of *Periyatirumoḷi*[120] is devoted to the glorious description of the Lord at Tirunaraiyūr. The mind is directed in every verse to think constantly of His Feet and attain them. The effects of worshipping, and constant thinking of His Feet are manifold. They would not have the haughtiness that they have some thing as their possession, nor would they lose their heart when their possessions are lost.[121] Worship of their Lord's Feet with flowers, which could be taken as penance,[122] was done by Brahmā[123] and when it is done by the selves would relieve them of the worldly bondage and would confer on them any benefit.[124] Nammāḷvār instructs his mind to offer flowers at His Feet and praise Him with folded hands in prayer[125] He refers to the details of ritual worship in his *Tiruvāymoli.* The celestials, the seers and others contemplate His qualities and worship Him with woven garland, holy water, sandal paste and incense.[126] The Āḷvār refers to Tiruvēṅkaṭam as a place where the celestials led by their leader Indra, attain salvation by worshiping the Lord with choicest flowers, holy water, lamp and incense.[127] He makes frequent reference to the offering of flowers and holy water.[128] There is reference to the collection of flowers at appropriate times (for worship).[129] The devotees and the ascetics with *Puruṣa-sūkta* on their lips in strict accordance with the ritual code offer service at the Feet of the Lord with plenty of flowers, incense, lamps, sandal paste and holy water.[130] Circumambulating (the Deity) with folded hands is

119. ibid. 47.
120. Peri. Tm. 6. 9.
121. I. Tv. 45.
122. ibid. 77.
123 ibid. 78.
124. Mū. Tv. 4.
125. P. Tv. 84.
126. TVM 1.5 : 2; 1.6 : 1.
127. ibid. 3.3 : 7.
128. ibid. 4.3 : 7; 4.7 : 8.
129. ibid. 4.7 : 9.
130. ibid. 5.2 : 9.

one aspect of worship according to this Āḷvār;[131] and also doing the same thing with fragrant holy water.[132] Sometimes circumambulating the town (or the mountain) is also spoken of.[133] The Āḷvār again says: "O devotees! worship Him with fresh flowers",[134] "in strict accordance with code of worship offering flowers and performing *pūjā*";[135] "contemplate His name by offering flowers with holy water".[136] Again the saint refers to collecting the incense and fragrant flowers, absolutely pure and offering them at His feet;[137] and offering praises of the Lord with sandal paste, lamp, incense and good lotus flowers.[138]

The mode of worship (*pūja*) referred to above is the replica of the services that are usually rendered to a beloved guest or an honoured king. The presence of the Deity is invoked (*āvāhana*); a seat is offered (*āsana*); the Feet are washed (*pādya*); an offering of sandle-wood paste and rice as a sign of respect is made (*arghya*); the sacred thread is put on the idol (*upavita*); sandal-wood paste is smeared (*candana*); flowers (*puṣpa*) are offered; incense (*dhūpa*) is burned; the lamps (*dīpa*) are waved; food (*naivedya*) is offered and then the betel (*tāmbūḷa*); next camphor (*nīrājana*) is burned and gold is given as a gift (*suvarṇapuṣpa*); finally the Deity is bidden farewell to (*visarjana*). Thus the images of Viṣṇu and of His incarnations are the popular idols that are worshipped both in temples and in the household. In the temples the priest will attend on the Deity as he would on a king. The King of kings is roused from sleep with music early in the morning. Morning Songs (*Tiruppaḷḷi-eḷucci*) of Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār is used for the purpose. Then after the ceremonial bath He is dressed in royal robes and decked with ornaments

131. ibid. 7.10: 1; 10.1 : 5.
132. ibid. 7, 10 : 2.
133. ibid. 10. 1 : 7.
134. ibid. 9.10: 3, 4.
135. ibid. 10.2: 4.
136. ibid. 10.2: 5.
137. ibid. 10.2: 9.
138. ibid. 10.2: 10.

and flowers. Artistic lights are waved before Him. Food is offered at regular intervals. The King holds His daily court, gives audience to His devotees, hears their complaints and bestows on them His Grace.[139] On festive occasions He goes out in state with all the regalia befitting the King of kings. This mystery play God enacts in all Viṣṇu temples of Tamil Nad for enticing those who are not enlightened from their hum-drum ways of life that lead only into regions of blinding darkness.

The kind of worship that was referred to above is offered every day. The word '*nāḷum*' signifies this.[140] Nammāḷvār says : "Worship the Lord both morning and evening, offering lotus flowers so that *karma* will be dispelled".[141] Worship in the early morning is important as it begins the day with the sacred thought. Āṇṭāḷ says : "*Ciṟṟañciṟukālē vantu uṉṉaic cēvittu*"[142] - 'worshipping Thee at the early morning'. Pūtattār says :

"Mālai ariyuruvaṉ pātamalar aṇintu
Kālai toḷuteḷumiṉ kaikōli".[143]

The phrase '*toḷuteḷumiṉ*' is to be noted. The word '*eḷumin*' (wake up) is important. The first word is '*toḷutal*' (bowing down). The phrase as it stands means that worship should occur first and then waking which is an impossibility. So the commentators generally change the word order and interpret them '*eḷuntu toḷumiṉ*' i.e , wake up and worship. But following the traditions of Parimelaḷakar and Pēraciriyar, this could be interpreted in this way : the worshippers always contemplate on God; their last thought before they go to bed is their worship of the Lord and their first thought on waking up at dawn is the same worship, and therefore they wake up thus with the thought of worshipping the Lord. Worshipping and waking are said to occur simultaneously.

139. This is seen in Lord of the Seven Hills at Tirupati by millions of pilgrims and devotees daily.
140. M.Tv. 37.
141. T.V.M. 9.10: 1.
142. T.Pv. 29.
143. I. Tv. 47.

The worship is performed thrice a day, at morn, noon and evening.[144] Different forms of worship such as "*tolutal*" (bowing down),[145] "*ninaital*" (contemplating on Him),[146] "*valipatal*" (worshipping Him),[147] and "*ennal*" (thinking of Him)[148] are also referred to by the Ālvārs. Bowing down, falling at the sacred Feet, touching them with the head, and folding the palms in what is called *añjali* pose are all mentioned by the saints. Rāmānuja has described, following the traditions of the Ālvārs, the special form of worship (*pūjā*) which is referred to by Tirumalicaiyālvār :[149] "I will now explain the manner in which the man with exclusive devotion to Bhagavān should perform the adoration (*ārādhana*) of the Lord. Having become a worshipper with supreme and exclusive devotion to Him and with a desire only to serve Him, remain mediating on Him, with a vision as clear as visual perception and with extreme love to Him".[159] This service to the Lord consists in five forms in the course of the day. Kulacēkarālvār refers to these five forms as "*Iru muppolutu ētti*"[151] – 'performing adoration five times in the day'.

The mystic saints who have sung hymns of *Tēvāram* have been referred to as "*paramanaiye pāṭuvār*" – 'those poets who sing songs only on the Lord'. According to the Saivite conception these poets have sung in Tamil and they have looked upon Tamil as the very form of the Lord. The later generations have considered these songs or hymns as the *Tamil Vedas* and the verses in Tamil as *Tamil mantras*. Similarly the Vaiṣṇavites also regard the hymns of Ālvārs as the *Tamil Vedas* and the verses as *Tamil mantras*.[152] The Ālvārs them-

---

144. I. Tv. 73.
145. T.V.M. 5.2: 9.
146. Perum. Tm. 1: 9; T.V.M. 6.9: 11.
147. Nān. Tv. 63.
148. T.V.M. 6.9: 11.
149. Nān. Tv. 63.
150. Nitya. pp 1 to 14
151. Perum. Tm. 1: 7.
152. One *ācārya* refers to *Tiruvāymoli* as '*Drāvida Vedasāgaram*' and another refers to Nammālvār as one who has given the quintessence of the four *Vedas* in the *antāti* scheme (vide T.V.M. *taniyans*).

selves have said that they worship the Lord through their poetry, Nammāḻvār refers to his poems as "garlands of words addressed to the cloud-complexioned Lord",[153] "the Tamil garland of a thousand verses"[154] etc.; in Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's opinion his hymns are "the divine garland woven with sweet words by Kalikanṟi (Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār)",[155] "the garland of fine words woven by the poet in great Tamil, the ruler of Tirumaṅkai",[156] "the cool garland of Tamil offered by Kaliyan̠ (Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār)",[157] "the garland of verses sung by Kalikan̠ṟi",[158] "the garland of fine words sung by Kalikan̠ṟi in music of unabated sweetness",[159] "the garland of songs sung by Kaliyan̠",[160] and "the garland of words uttered for the sake of the Lord's devotees".[161] Again in other places he voices forth: "Through my songs Thou hast manifested Thy presence in my heart";[162] "songs which do not celebrate the Lord Whose chest is decorated with the basil garland are no songs at all;[163] "I decorate my Lord with a pure garland of my own words".[164] Periyāḻvār, in his humility and self-condemnation, says: "I uttered wretched verses with my evil tongue on Thee Whose hands carry the conch and the discus".[165] Poykaiyāḻvār says: "I lay this wreath of words at the Feet of the Lord with the blazing discus so that the sea of troubles might vanish".[166] Pūtattār expresses this idea as: "My humble self, well versed in great Tamil, dedicates the garland of noble Tamil to Thy

153. T.V.M. 7.2: 11.
154. ibid. 2.7: 13.
155. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 10.
156. ibid. 1.7: 10.
157. ibid. 2.2: 10.
158. ibid. 2.3: 10.
159. ibid. 2. 8: 10.
160. ibid. 4.4: 10.
161. ibid. 7.3: 10.
162. ibid. 8.10: 9.
163. ibid. 10.7: 4.
164. T.K. 16.
165. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.1: 2.
166. M. Tv. 1.

twin Feet";[167] "Nectar, honey, the One with the discus, the One Who delighted in bringing nectar (from the sea) – with a garland made of such nectar-like words I prasied the great Lord."[168] The great Bhaktisāra gives expression to this idea thus: "I will not sing praises of man with my tongue which has sung of the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha Who did not deem it a great event even when Rudra with fire-red matted hair offered worship at His Feet with flowers".[169] Again Nammāḷvār says: "I extolled the golden Feet of my Lord sought and worshipped by the Eternals with my compositions"[170] "O my mind! Present your garland of verses to Mātava, Nārāyaṇa, Keśava, the Lord from time imemmorial, the One as impressive and awe-inspiring as the mountains, if you want to scatter the heavy sorrows which afflict us".[171] Again the Āḷvār voices forth: "I long to merge into the Feet of the Lord by divesting myself of the body through sustained and long singing of His praises";[172] "I am not the one born to sing the glories of man. The Lord of the numberless auspicious qualities with the discus in His hand is there for my lips to sing His praises";[173] "I am the poet-laureate of the Lord Who goes on creating world after world. Is it proper for me to compose verses in praise of any one else?"[174] "When Thou hast been the theme of my hymns, I would never address to another those sweet words that emanate from my tongue".[175] In the whole of one decad, invariably in the third line of every verse, the Āḷvār refers to his destiny to praise the Lord in garlands of verses: "He that ripped open the horse-démon will not make me lack anything for seven into seven births if I continue to worship Him and raise my hands in prayer as much as I can and sing His praises for which I am

---

167. I. Tv. 74.
168. ibid. 85.
169. Nāṉ. Tv, 75.
170. P. Tv. 45.
171. ibid. 65.
172. T.V.M. 3.9: 8.
173. ibid. 3.9: 9.
174. ibid. 3.9: 10.
175. ibid. 3.9: 1.

gifted;[176] with words full of meaning and music my garlands of verses have saved me from the worst of sufferings and I have realized in my mind the Lord of Eternals;[177] for long I have worshipped and realized Him with my garlands of words full of music;[178] the Supreme Lord, armed with the invincible discus, has been approached with the service of my tongue which strung garlands of music for His worship;[179] the future cannot be fruitless to me who has suitably adored the Lord of the Eternals with the music the garlands of verses and realized Him in my experience;[180] I have been blessed with the gift of His accepting my garlands of words and therefore I lack nothing;[181] even in the region of Eternity, I have none of my equals for my having obtained the mental tranquility to sing my garlands of words adoring the Supreme Lord Whose Feet are borne by the lotus-flowers;[182] on the Lord of the Eternals it has been given to me to weave the *Tamil Prabandha* which, to the devotees, forms clouds capable of their rain of bliss (ānanda).[183] Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār says: "Through my songs Thou hast manifested Thy presence in my heart".[184]

The greatest contributions made to the tradition of divine enjoyment is by Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār who is a great Tamil scholar – '*Iruntamiḻ nūṟpulavaṉ*'. The Āḷvār is a master of the four types of Tamil poetry viz., *ācu* (sudden). *vittāra* (elaborate), *matura* (sweet) and *cittira* (artistic), and hence is known by '*nālukavip-perumāḷ*.' The words he uses, the metres he chooses, lend themselves to such symphony and sweetness that to recite or sing his hymns is tantamount to enjoyment of God. He himself says to God: "*pāṭṭiṉāl uṉṉai eṉ neñcattu*

176. ibid. 4.5 : 1.
177. ibid. 4.5 : 2.
178. ibid. 4.5 : 3.
179. ibid. 4.5 : 4.
180. ibid. 4.5 : 6.
181. ibid. 4.5: 7.
182. ibid. 4.5: 8.
183. ibid. 4.5: 10.
184. Peri. Tm. 8.10: 9.

iruntamai kāṭṭināy-"[185] 'By song Thou showest to me that Thou art inside my heart'. Really the Āḷvār's hymns show Him to us.[186] The alliteration, the balance and the appropriate sound-sense all make for exquisite poetry that captures the ear and ravishes the soul. The aesthetic perfection and the captivating beauty of the Āḷvār's *arcā* form in his birthplace (Tiruvāli) are equalled only by the ecstatic outpourings of his love-laden heart in the shape of the rapturous verse.[187] Thousands of devotees, votaries and admirers revel in feasting their eyes on the ethereal beauty of form and face, and regale their souls with the recitation of the soul-stirring hymns of this Āḷvār-poet who has shown that the path towards God lies not through penance or self-mortification, but in literature and love.[188]

Nature is looked upon as the very form of Godhead worshipped by almost all the Āḷvārs. Tirumāliruñcōlai, Tiruvēṅkaṭam and Ciṅkavēḷkunṟam are to them the very Lord and the saints describe those mountains in their hymns without even speaking of the respective deities there.[189] Says Nammāḷvār: "*Tiruvēṅkaṭramāmalai onṟumē toḻa nam vinai ōyumē*"[190]-'all our sins will be removed by the worship of Tiruvēṅkaṭam mountain only.' Poykaiyāḷvār refers to the mountain as one which puts out the fire of *karma* - "*vinaic cuṭarai nantuvikkum vēṅkaṭam.*"[191] Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār directs us to go and worship the majestic Vēṅkaṭam as the hill dispels our sins.[192] He speaks of his chance utterance of the name of

---

185. ibid. 8.10: 9.
186. ibid: 9.2 (for example).
187. ibid. 3.5; 3.6; 3.7.
188. This reminds us Cēkkiḷār's statement '*arccaṉai pāttē ākum*' where he equates the recitation of the hymns and the chanting of the *mantras*, constituting His thousand names. (vide P.P. *Taṭuttāṭkoṇṭapurāṇam*, 70).
189. T.V.M. 2.10; 3.3; Peri. Tm. 1.7; 1.8; 2.1; Nac. Tm. 9; M. Tv. 76; 1. Tv. 53, 75; Mū. Tv. 58, 68, 71, 75; Nāṉ. Tv. 39, 47, 48.
190. ibid. 3.3: 8.
191. M. Tv. 26.
192. Nāṉ. Tv. 42.

that hill giving him emancipation.[193] Nammāḷvār advises us to go and worship the Tirumāliruñcōlai hill before our bubbling youthfulness begins to disintegrate.[194] *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra* compares the creation proceeding from God with the creation of poetry or any work of art proceeding from the imagination of the poet or artist. This gives us a better understanding of the poetry of the Āḷvārs.

To Nammāḷvār Nature is the beautiful form of the Lord. "*Yāvaiyum yāvarum āy ninṟa māyaṉ.*"[195] – 'Māyaṉ Who becomes all objects and all persons too.' He is known by many names; his resplendent forms are many.[196] He is neither male nor female nor neuter; it cannot be said that He is, nor He is not.[197] The Āḷvārs see the Lord as the pure form reflected in Nature. At other times, Nature itself appears to them as worshipping the Lord very much like themselves. They see in Nature the animals such as elephants, lions and monkeys, birds such as parrots and peacocks, and insects like the honey bees worship and sing she glories of the Lord. For example, in the Tirupati Hills a male elephant performs its ablutions by washing its month and its feet in its rut (ichor) gathers fresh flowers laden with honey and offers its worship to the majestic Lord at Vēṅkaṭam.[198] Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār speaks of an elephant which has its trunk uplifted with the intention of getting the moon for a lamp for the Lord.[199] The mythological lion (*āḷi*) kills an elephant, takes out its tusks and offers oblations at the feet of the deity at Ciṅkavēḷ-kuṉṟam.[200] The monkeys enter the floral garden in the early

---

193. ibid, 40. According to Sanskrit tradition the word '*vēṅkatam*' is made up of two words viz.. vēm + kaṭam; vēm–sins. kaṭam–burning; the one which burns our sins.
194. TVM. 2.10: 1.
195. ibid. 6.8: 7.
196. ibid. 2.5: 6.
197. ibid. 2.5: 10.
198. Mū. Tv. 70.
199. Nāṉ. Tv. 46.
200. Peri. Tm. 1.7: 1.

hours of the morning, gather flowers just blossoming and offer worship.[201]

No doubt the whole teaching of the Āḷvārs is suffused with the principles of the *Bhakti* school as set forth in the *āgamaic* text-books. Even the first Āḷvārs have direct references to the general principle inculcated in the work that unalloyed and single-minded devotion to Viṣṇu in the simplest form possible is the most efficient means for the attainment of salvation.[202] In fact, they state that the more elaborate forms of worship in the manner of *Vedas* and *vedic* learning may be suited to those that have the equipment for doing it; but, for actual attainment of salvation, that is not at all necessary for those who do not have the equipment. A far simpler method of devotion, the mere recitation of the names of God, is enough, provided only that devotion is absolutely single-minded. The great Bhīṣma gave a list of thousand names of Viṣṇu to Yudhiṣthra who asked for an easy means to be freed from bondage. Thus arose the thousand names of Viṣṇu (*Viṣṇu sahasranāma*) to which frequent references are contained in the works of the Āḷvārs. He is referred to as one having thousand names.[203] The utterance of even one among these would bring to the person who utters it results which increased thousandfold of what would normally be the effect of uttering a single name.[204] The thought that His names are to be uttered drives away the sins.[205] Through the resolve of this kind, the individual gets lustre, valour, wealth, handsome appearance and good qualties.[206] The compositions of the Āḷvārs contain frequent

201. I. Tv. 72.
202. ibid. 38.
203. P. Tv. 70; T.V.M. 8.1: 10; 9.3: 1.
204. T.V.M. 10.2: 2,3.
205. P. Tv. 53.
206. Mū. Tv. 10.
207. Peri. Tm. 1.2: 7. Prahlāda is said to have recited them much to the discomfort of his father (Peri. Tm. 2.3: 8). The cowherds and gods too did the same (ibid., 3.3: 3).

references to the thousand names of Viṣṇu, to the need for their recitation and also to the efficacy of this recitation.[207] The thousand names show only that the Lord's names are innumerable. His names are countless and in an apologetic tone, Bhīṣma refers to them.[208] However, He is referred to as one having thousand names.[209] To the atheist and the idealist, the repetition of such names would appear as superstitions, but "there is also a subjective element, a recognition that the creed or prayer or formula thus recited, even though not understood, brings with it a certain religious atmosphere, a sense of reverence or dependence, or a renewed and strengthened faith."[210] "The very form of words itself has a kind of sanctity, is peculiarly religious, and is naturally regarded as specially pleasing to the deity."[211]

The devout brahmins worship the feet of the Lord by chanting the *Vedic* hymns. Those, who are not qualified to study the *Vedas* could, with the same effect, utter His names.[212] Names like Viṣṇu, Govinda, Kuṭakkūttaṉ, Kōvalaṉ are uttered by the Āḻvār.[213] This means that any name of God, whether it forms the *Sahasranāma* or it is a word in Tamil referring to God, could be uttered. Nammāḻvār goes on further to suggest that if any one simply counts the numbers as one, two, three......the Lord will present Himself before the devotee. The Lord would surely appear when in this enumeration, number twenty-six is mentioned.[214] "Well and good" says Pūtattāḻvār, "if you can, chant the *Vedas*; if not, the utterance of the names of the Lord brings you the essence of all the *Vedas*; the ultimate significance of the *Vedas* lies enshrined in these names."[215]

---

208. M.Bh. Karṇa. 83: 15.
209. Peri. Tm. 1.5: 4; 1.8: 7; 6.6: 9; M.Tv. 68; Periyal. Tm. 3.7: 8.
210. *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 284–285.
211. ibid. p. 313.
212. T.V.R. 64.
213. T.V.M. 2.7: 4; cf. ibid. 10.2: 10.
214. The numbers 1 to 24 refer to the Twenty-four *tattvas* of matter. The soul is the Twenty-fifth and the Lord is the Twenty-sixth. vide *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 1.10: 2.
215. I. Tv. 39.

Poykaiyāḷvār says : "As long as you have the power of utterance, if you utter the various names of the Lord, that by itself will be better than ritual worship through the conventional charms."[216] The name of the ocean-hued Lord is heard, remembered and meditated upon by His devotees who wake up early in the morning.[217] Again Pūtattāḷvār says: "Thy auspicious names is the inner meaning of *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas*; Thyself are the essence of these; let me realise Thee through the perfect Logos,"[218] and "We will be elevated to the status of Eternals if we utter the names of the Lord with understanding by *jñāna*".[219] Pēyāḷvār's advice to his mind is this: "O mind! let us fold our hands in worship, uttering the names of the Lord like Nārāyaṇa and so on."[220] The daily work of Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār is to repeat the names of the Lord. Unlike the rest of the world, the uttering is a whole-time pre-occupation with him.[221] According to Periyāḷvār our fingers are meant for counting the auspicious names of the Lord.[222] The Āḷvār's foster-daughter Āṇṭāḷ in the course of waking her comrades asks the lady of one house, "The utterance of various such names as Māmāyaṉ, Mātavan Vaikuṇthan gives delight to your daughter and pushes her into bliss of sleep"[223]. "To those who chant the names of the cloud-hued Lord" says Nammāḷvār, "there is no sorrow; whatever the births they take they are equal to the Eternals,"[224] and again "We acquired the Grace of Nārāyaṇa by simply chanting His various names."[225] The Āḷvār as the bride takes particular delight in the utterance of

216. M. Tv. 70.
217. ibid. 66.
218. I.Tv. 64.
219. ibid. 2.
220. Mū. Tv. 8.
221. Nāṉ. Tv. 85.
222. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 3.
223. T.Pv. 9.
224. T.V.M. 10.5: 8; cf. the whole decad 10.5.
225. ibid. 10.6: 3.

His names: "All the words that emerge from her lips without intermission are the names of the blue-hued Lord."[226] "How beautifully the distinguishing features and the names of the Lord emerge from her lips!"[227] "The delight that Āḻvār-nāyaki as a child gets from uttering the names of the Lord is greater than the delight she gets from the pet birds *pūvai*, parrots, the playball, the toy cooking pots and the flower baskets."[228] "Leaving this bliss of uttering Thy names, I do not want even the bliss of going to the world of the celestials and ruling over it"[229] is the statement of Toṇṭaratip-poṭiyāḻvār. "Whether I am destined to go to the world of Eternals or celestials, I will always cherish the name of the Lord without forgetfulness"[230] says Nammāḻvār.

Bhagavān Nārada has declared in *Śrīmad Aṣṭākṣara Brahma Vidyā* that there are in different men varying degrees of faith in the *Mūlamantra*. He says: "In proportion to the degree of faith that a man has in the eight-lettered *Mantra* will he attain the fruit thereof. It is impossible to measure its greatness".[231] The Supreme Ruler of all will ultimately protect even those devotees who are far from perfect and whose faith is not strong enough. For it has been said: "By the man who has once uttered the two syllables 'Hari' - by him steps have been taken for entering *mokṣa*".[232] In accordance with this, Āḻvantār has conveyed the same idea: "Whoever folds his hands in worship to Thee in any manner and at any time - his sins vanish at once. It penetrates all good things. It never fails to bear fruit",[233] and so also, "A single drop of the ocean of nectar called *bhakti* towards the two lotuses of Thy Feet will extinguish instantly the spreading wild fire called *saṃsāra*, and confer

226. ibid. 6.5; 6.
227. ibid. 6.5: 7.
228. ibid. 6.7: 3.
229. T.M. 2.
230. T.V.M. 2.9: 5.
231. Nār. Kal. 1: 14.
232. V.P. 70: 84.
233. *Śtotraratnam*-28.

superior happiness.[234] "By uttering the three syllables 'Govinda'' says Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār, "Kshatrabandu who stood surrounded by his past *karma* swarming like ants, attained the highest state''.[235] It is therefore seen from the above, that *Īśvara* will promote perfection of the *upāya* and protect the man. "The divine seers say that Thou art to be sought as the Saviour and that Thou protectest those who have sought Thy protection."[236]

The utterance of Bhagavāṉ's name will destroy all sins, provided the man who utters it does not hate Him. The man, who, even without his being aware of it, pronounces the name of Bhagavāṉ, is freed from all sins, in the same way as a forest is freed from deer owing to the fear of a lion''[237]. "The mention of Bhagavāṉ's name - though it be to call a person who (merely) bears that name, though it be in irony, though it be pronounced wrongly, though it be in derision - the mere mention of His name will destroy all sins''.[238] "The mention of many of the names of Bhagavāṉ which describe his attributes and actions is much more than necessary. The mention of a single name is enough.[239]

The devotee believes in the mercy of God, but cannot undertake any initiative in adopting the means for the removal of his own distress. He realizes that his efforts would only become abortive. The one act (apart from uttering His names), which he could undertake is offering prayers to the Lord. While doing this, love and endearment should guide his prayers[240] and not fear and dread that God would punish him for the offences. Hedonistic tendencies are found to

---

234. ibid. 29.
235. T.M. 4.
236. Ram. Yuddha. 120: 18.
237. V.P. 6.8: 19.
238. Bhāg. P. 6.2: 14.
239. For example; Ajāmila, sinful though he was, attained *mukti* by calling his son Nārāyaṇa at the time of his death (Vide Bhāg. P. 6.3: 24).
240. P. Tv. 37.

have left ultimately a hollow on the seekers of pleasure which leaves dissatisfaction and disappointment on them. Besides producing a salutary effect on those who pray with faith, the prayers are unsurpassed in being the effective means to turn grief into resignation. Fears are replaced by readiness to face dangers. Mental calmness takes the place of the din and bustle of life. In addition, there is no other method for appealing to God like this more simple for application and certain in producing the result. If prayers could not be offered at all times the intervals when they are not offered could be spent by simply talking about the Lord in any way, even if it be irrelevant.[241] At least the mind and speech are directed towards the single purpose, that is, God, though lacking in concentration. This need not be considered as worship, but as living in God for the time being. When prayers are not offered, when there is no one with whom one can talk about God,[242] one can simply think of Him, not, of course, undertaking any contemplation.

One attractive feature in prayers is the inclusion of music. Prayer assumes the highest form of expression when it is set to music. The rhythm and speech produce a profound and powerful effect on the mind of the singers. Music has more a subjective influence, though the objective one is not to be ruled out, but has a singular appeal. Very often the spontaneous utterances of the mystic singers of earlier periods are put to music and sung or recited as the case may be. It is in this sense that the *Vedic* recitals are arranged both in temples and houses and for the same reason the hymns of the Āḻvārs, together with the *stotras* of the *ācāryas*, have become part of prayers both in private and temple worship.[243] Quite often, these prayers are in the form of descriptions of the Lord, His body, His retinue and exploits. While praying to God for protection, the devotee must appeal for protection to the discus, conch, sword, bow, club or mace, the guardians of the eight quarters. They are to be requested to be on the

241. P. Tv. 38.
242. ibid. 66.
243. ibid. 86.

alert. Garuḍa shall not be asleep. All these have to keep watch over the body of the devotee, as the Lord has occupied the bedroom of the devotee's body.[244] In practice, the religious-minded people continue to offer their prayers, even if they find their prayers not answered. They find "in prayer something of very much greater value than an easy means of satisfying particular wants."[245]

The prayers take also the form of conversation. "The individual praying talks to the Great Listener and feels at times some faint suggestion of a response."[246] The method is helpful for making a personal confession of one's sins. Though pragmatic, the devotee finds it easy to be frank about his sins. Āṇṭāḷ in one of her lovely lyrics puts the question: "*Kovintarku ōr kuṟṟēval immaip piṟavi cayyātē iṉip pōyc ceyyum tavamtāṉ eṉ ?*"[247] - 'If it is not serving Govinda here and in this life, what else as penance have I to perform ?' In another context the lady-saint says:

"Eṟṟaikkum ēḻ ēḻ piṟavikkum uṉtaṉṉōṭu
Uṟṟōmē āvōm uṉakkē nām āṭceyvōm."[248]

- 'For ever and anon and for as many as seven times seven births, we are Thy kith and kin; we are Thy bond servants'. A bird in the hand is certainly worth many more in the bush. Here we are, blessed with a thoughtful and feeling life, unlike myriads and myriads of souls which are dragging on their miserable existence in unthinking animal and bird bodies. If here and now God, whom we so eagerly long after cannot vouchsafe to us the sweetness of His company and the rapture of His enjoyment, a fig for the hereafter, the problematical uncertain hereafter, of which we can be sure only by the strength of our faith and not by positive proof of the senses! Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār poses the question: "*Er ōr muyalviṭṭuk*

244. Periyāḻ Tm. 5.2 : 9.
245. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 324.
246. ibid. p. 326.
247. Nāc. Tm. 13 : 9.
248. T. Pv. 29.

kākkaip piṉ pōvatē?"[249] – 'When one can get enough food from out of sure *terra firma*, why go after the winged denizens of the air?' About such consecrated service of the Lord, Periyāḷvār says :

"Uṉakkup panicey tirukkum
tavamuṭai yēṉiṉip pōyoruvaṉ.
"Taṉakkup paṉintu, kataittalai
nirkaiṉiṉ cāyai aḷivukaṉṭāy–"[250]

– 'Having once become a devotee to Thee by virtue of my great luck if I leave Thee and go to serve another Your supremacy will crumble';

"Kātam palavum tirintuḷaṉ
ṟēṟkaṅkōr niḻalillai nīrillai, uṉ
Pāta niḻalallāl maṟṟōr
uyirppiṭam nāṉeṅkum kaṉkiṉṟilēṉ"–[251]

'Having roamed about in vain for leagues and leagues without water or shelter I have at last discovered that the shelter of Thy Feet is the only life-giving spot, which I have not come across with any where';

"Aṉṟu vayiṟṟiṟ kiṭantirun
tēyaṭi māiceyyal uṟṟiruppāṉ
Iṉṟuvantu iṅkuṉṉaik kaṇṭukoṇ
ṭēṉiṉip pōka viṭuvatuṇṭē"–[252]

'Even when I was in my mother's womb I had determined to serve Thee: now after having come out of it and having enjoyed Thy divine presence, wherefore can I be gone?' Some of the Āḷvārs, as it has been pointed out elsewhere in this work, have not hesitated to whittle down the pleasures attainable in Vaikuṇṭha. Even Nammāḷvār, in one of these 'drunken moods' of spiritual bliss, interrogates God Himself thus : "To me who regard Thee as my food, my drink, and my joy, what have You to give in return for my unceasing

---

249. C. TML. – kaṇ. 8.
250. *Periyāḷ. Tm.* 5.3 : 3.
251. ibid. 5.3 : 4.
252. ibid. 5.3 : 9.

love?" "Vaikuṇṭha" replies the Lord, "is my supreme possession and nothing higher have I got to bestow on you". The Āḷvār rejoins : "Do you think that Vaikuṇṭha is sweeter than the mind of Your devotee deeply lodged in Your goodness, greatness and grace? Why, if it were so, have You Yourself discarded Your lofty seat in that Vaikuṇṭha and come to dwell permanently in our hearts?"[253] This conversation is but one of the many in which these holy saints, immersed in the deluge of divine bliss, indulged pretty often

There are also prayers of the cosmic type, where the petty things here become known as insignificant and God's real nature is getting felt directly and the devotee gets more occasions for direct communion with God. This kind of prayer leads to meditation. This could be considered as the exalted type where there is the emotional awareness of the ultimate Reality. Mystic experience is another result of this kind of prayer.

The devotee, while offering his prayers, is reminded of the exploits of the Lord and the occasions and instances which reveal His acts of help to the suffering humanity. It is but natural that he should mention such instances in his prayers to strengthen his claim for God's grace.[254] The qualities of the Lord[255] are also recounted showing that the devotees have faith in their efficacy for winning the Lord. Nammāḷvār records the effects of singing the glories and attributes of God through his personal experience. He has nothing to complain or worry about; by praising Him, singing in musical melodies about His greatness and dancing with joy he has supreme satisfaction.[256] Nothing obstructs his realizing God nor does any affliction affect him.[257] He does not feel the fatigue of the worldly life nor has any suffering.[258] The Āḷvār expresses

253. P. Tv. 53, 68.
254. P. Tv. 40.
255. ibid. 39: cf. ibid. 78.
256. T.V.M. 3.10: 1, 2.
257. ibid. 3.10: 4, 5.
258. ibid. 3.10: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

his joy at having the fortune to worship and pray at the Lord's Feet.[259] He asks his mind not to forget the Feet and have permanently the daily experience of them.[260]

The very first verse of *Tiruvāymoḷi* is in the form of an appeal to the mind which is asked to worship the Feet which are lustrous enough to remove the miseries. The Feet of the Lord are brilliant and so they remove the darkness of the worldly sufferings. The selves have only one duty to perform and that this worshipping the lustrous Feet of the Lord. This leads to the spiritual elevation of those selves.[261] The prayer of a self shall also be not to get any thing from the Lord but only receiving the touch of His Feet with its head.[262] The Āḷvār requests the Lord to bestow on him the knowledge and strength to pray and have His Feet on the head.[223] The Lord shall not permit him to get into the material world.[324]

The Āḷvār who had the delectable experience of having the Lord's Feet on his head had sold out his self to God. Since it has been sold out, the Āḷvār cannot any longer claim possession of it, that is, cannot have either *ahaṅkāra* or *mamakāra*. The Lord's Feet are there on the head of the Āḷvār who, in the absence of *ahaṅkāra*, cannot also lay claims to them, though he had as it were purchased them for the self.[265] The elephant Gajendra which was firmly seized by the crocodile, could not find any one for its rescue and hence shouted out to the Lord. This cry brought the Lord to it. The elephant used to pluck the flowers for worshipping the Feet of the Lord. It must have had the firm conviction that nothing but the Feet of the Lord could be a refuge for people.[265(a)] When the crocodile seized it, it was then having

259. ibid. 10.4: 6.
260. ibid. 10.4: 8.
261. ibid. 1.1: 1; 1.2: 10.
262. ibid. 2.9: 2; cf. *Śtotraratnam* 31; P. Tv. 87.
263. ibid. 2.9: 3; P. Tv. 12.
264. ibid. 2.9: 10.
265. ibid. 8.1:10.
265(a) *Mumukṣup-paṭi* - 146.

flowers in the trunk for offering them at the Feet of the Lord but alas, it could not do so and so the Āḷvār fancies that the painful feeling which the elephant had then for not being able to offer the flowers at the Feet of the Lord was removed by the Lord who appeared before it and killed the crocodile.[266]

Prayers which are offered by the devotees to God are generally in the form of supplications. The self feels much worried about the material disadvantages, once it realises the nature of God and its relationship to Him. Too often, it requires freedom from the dangers that lie in wait for him and people of his kind would be content with the minimum facilities which are available to them. On such occasions, he finds no one to come to his rescue and realizes that men of his kind are of limited powers and so appeals to God for safeguards from dangers.[267] The prayers are offered on the conviction that the Lord would surely lend his ears to them and attend to his needs. Petitional is the important form of prayer. More intelligent and enlightened selves make an appeal for spiritual blessings. The times of crisis do not affect this attitude of theirs considerably. They ask for reunion with God here and here itself. Rarely, the prayers are offered in order to reach Him after death. Sometimes, the prayers take the form of thanksgiving. Instances are not rare when the devotees wish well of God, out of deep love for Him in order that His position would continue to be stabilized. It is not as if a poor self could contribute to God's stabilized greatness, but ardent love and abiding faith in Him establish a bond between Him and the devotee and this tie makes the Deity present Himself to him more as a lovable person than a Deity who is difficult for approach.

Weeping is one of the methods invariably resorted to by the weak and the impotent for the attainment of their heart's desire. Weeping excites sympathy, disarms opposition, and goes a long way in securing the desired object from the hands of the unwilling giver. It is also designed by nature to

---

256. T.V.M. 7.10: 8.
267. Peri. Tm. 4.7.

indicate pain and the existence of suffering. No wonder then that the seekers after God also weep and wail a great deal. They feel incomplete without God Who is the Object of their love; they feel desolate and forlorn when they think that they have been abandoned by their God in a wilderness of suffering and sorrow; they feel further deeply distressed at their helpless plight; they are daily in mortal dread of the temptations and allurements of the material world which threaten to drag them away from their spiritual path. Experiencing all these and seeing by introspection several other kindred sensations of fear and insecurity, they wring out their hearts in grief and break out into rhapsodies of melancholic strain which are as beautiful in their melody as they are striking in their disconsolateness. The songs and hymns of the devout men of yore are nothing but a musical record of the wailing of their souls in the fulness of their longing and the poignancy of their yearning for a God Whom they loved, worshipped, and sought after. Intense dissatisfaction at their present state, and a keen aspiration to true spiritual greatness shook these devotees to the very foundation of their beings, and the result is a series of sobbing songs sung out of sheer agony of the soul.

It is a matter of common knowledge that only the materially-minded and sordid man-of-the-world, who does not feel the existence of a spirit behind and beyond the matter that meets the eye, that can be satisfied with his present state, and be content with mere animal existence. He may be troubled by unfulfilled desires and thwarted ambitions in material life, but he is not worried by spiritual wants and longings of which he knows nothing. On the other hand, there are a few others who out of their faith in God have made it their pleasure to love Him, their duty to do His behest, and their purpose to reach Him. These men of God are not satisfied with their present lot; nor are they content with their present existence. Their noble soul clamours for a beatific union or a coalescing unity with God, and they will know no satisfaction, nor find any comfort, till they attain their ultimate goal, God. It is these disappointed devotees, and disquieted seekers that have specialised in the art of weeping

and they have left to us a large legacy of laments, portraying their divine discontentment. The loudness of their lament is in direct proportion to the intensity of their longing that prompts us to weep. If one feels like a fish out of water one is sure to writhe in agony till one is thrown back into the water, or tlll one dies. If one feels only lukewarm in one's desolation, then one simply moans in a low tone about one's woes. In the course of a man's spiritual progress, a certain amount of sickmindedness is a necessary stage. A dispassionate contemplation of the futility of the human endeavour is an absolute prerequisite for spiritual stability. In other words, as soon as a discriminating self-analysis of one's ways of life discloses to one what one really is and has been, and what one really ought to be, a sense of remorse is an invariable sensation that results out of the introspection. This feeling of remorse causes the first weeping. When one takes stock of one's past life, nothing is left to one but to exclaim: "*ūmaṉār kaṇṭa kaṉavilum paḷutāy oḷintaṉa kaḷinta annāṭkaḷ*"[268] – 'the days that are past have gone away like the dreams of a dumb man, useless and unexpressed.' Like the water that has flown down a river, those days are no more to be, and there is no possibility of redeeming them from the lap of the past. This feeling of lost chances is so bitter that Poykaiyāḷvār cries out: 'I wept in sheer dread that all the several days that are past have been spent to no purpose' – "*paḷutē pala pakalum pōyiṉa eṉṟu añci aḷutēṉ.*"[269] Nammāḷvār regrets that he has wasted all his past days without any feeling for God.[270] After one has wept out this feeling and risen chastened out of it, one makes a big effort to be pure in future, and to learn to pine for God Whom one has so long forgotten. Here again the feeling of one's smallness and His greatness may oppress and depress one. Here is the second lament, on the unworthiness of the individual soul laden with past sins and full of potentiality for future sins to realise the pure and blemishless God. The

---

268 *Peri. Tm.* 1.1: 3.
269. M.Tv. 16.
270. P. Tv. 82.

failure to qualify for true spiritual greatness in the past was the first cause of grief; the incapacity to qualify for it in the present is the second cause, and perhaps a more disquieting one. This feeling is also in turn wept out. Wide reading and deep reflection on the Lord's abounding *saulabhya* (accessibility) and abiding Grace, dispel all fears born out of inequality, and it is realised that with all His greatness, God is not quite approachable. As Nammāḻvār says: *"pattuṭai aṭiyavarkku eḷiyavaṉ"* – 'He is always amenable to love or bhakti of His devotees.'[271] It has been elsewhere described the stages in the growth of love in the case of Nammāḻvār and one can presently see how the venerable saint wailed and wept through over the thousand verses of *Tiruvāymoḻi* with emotion and fervour.

Nammāḻvār's songs especially those of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* are the best example of this cult of weeping as a method of God attainment. The Āḻvār says in a verse: *"ceṭiyār ākkai aṭiyāraic cērtal tīrkkum tirumālai, aṭiyēṉ kāṇpāṉ alaṟṟuvaṉ"*[272] – 'He that can redeem me from mortality characteristic of the jungle of *samsāra*, Him I would bewail for to enjoy *darśan* of;' in another verse he cries: *"kūvik kūvik koṭuviṉait tūṟṟul niṉṟa, pāviyēṉ palakālam vaḻi tikaittu alamarkiṉṟēṉ"*[273] – 'Embroiled as I am in the inextricable tangle of *samsāra* for long years without knowing how to extricate myself, I shout and shout for redemption.' In another place his God-hunger finds expression thus: "Thou art my very life; Thou art the very precious nectar; Thou hast enslaved me; Thou that hast Garuḍa for Thy chariot and the resplandent discus for Thy weapon; Thou, most handsome of visage! I am a sinner; I yearn with a poignant heart in my appeal to Thee, but it has not been given to me to enjoy the experience of Thy *darśan*'[274]; in another verse of the same hymn he pathetically

---

271. T.V.M. 1.3: 1.
272. ibid. 1.5: 7.
273. ibid. 3.2: 9.
274. ibid. 3.8: 7.

exclaims: "How long can I mourn interminably? Thou hast uprooted the twin *maruta* trees by the mere act of Thy crawling between them. My great Lord, mine is the longing to enjoy *darśan* of Thy Feet. In my utter futility I became woe-begone and through my garland of verses I still make appeal to Thee."[275] In an attitude of confession of sins the Āḷvār prays for divine presence:

> "Tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa entāy tāmōtarā eṉṟu eṉṟu
> Kūvik kūvi neñcuḻruki kaṇpaṉi cōra niṉṟāl
> Pāvi nīeṉṟu oṉṟu collāy pāviyēṉ kāṇa vantē."[276]

– 'Thy Feet covered the whole world in conquest; Thou shrank into a meek being for cords ! In this way I shout for long. My heart melts, my eyes overflow. I may be a sinner. But if Thou appeared before me to condemn me even as a sinner I can enjoy Thy divine presence'. In another place the saint cries : "Great God, Thou hast installed Thyself at *Kuṭantai* (Kumbakonam) for worshippers of my calibre. My lot has been to look up the heavens to enjoy Thy divine *darśan*. I cry hoarse and I worship Thee. In my ecstasy I trepidate; I put down my head in shame, sinner as I am. Though I am most loathsome I sing of Thy praises".[277] Here is the struggle of the Āḷvār as Nāyaki; the struggle has found expression in the words of the maid-companion: "At first sight the Āḷvār-nāyaki talks of the beautiful white conch and blazing discus, and of the lotus-eyes of the Lord. Her eyes overflow and she stands breathless and speechless";[278] "she stands petrified. As soon as she hears the holy name '*Teva-pirāṉ*', she softens herself, her lips seem to utter, betimes her eyes overflow";[279] "she is in a divine trance; she mutters the *vyūha* state of the Lord in the milky ocean, of the three strides of the Lord to conquer the world, and of His role as a cowherd;"[280] "all her utterances are inclined towards the blue-complexioned Lord, Kaṇṇapirāṉ. Her coyness has given

275. ibid. 3.8: 10.
276. ibid. 4.7: 3.
277. ibid. 5.8: 4, 5.
278. ibid. 6.5: 1.
279. ibid 6.5: 2.
280. ibid. 6.5 : 3.

place to an inward joy and an inner ecstasy".[281] The Āḻvār calls loudly in words that could possibly melt away the hearts even of listeners. In a verse he pathetically cries: "*Tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa taṭam tāmaraikaṭkē, kūvikkoḷḷum kālam iṉṉam kuṟukātō*"[282] - 'The God's handsome but gigantic Feet have subjugated the world. When will it be given to me to repose in Them?' The Āḻvār-nāyaki says : "He has enjoined me to describe Him by the names Māl, Hari, Nāraṇaṉ, Śrī Mātavaṉ, Gōvindaṉ, Vaikuṇṭhan; but He never once cared to show Himself up or even to give a semblance of His coming'?[283] The intensity of his feeling of woe reaches its peak in one *Tiruvāymoḻi.* Having failed in all his appeals and utterances to have a glimpse of the beauty of the Lord's *Divyamaṅgaḷa vigraha*, despair leads to despondency and the Āḻvār comes to the end of his tether. He has deeply yearned to have His *darśan* in full, His handsome appearance, His vision like the clouds, His majesty like the rising sun, all these have been great expectations. "Alas! I met my bitterest disappointment; I am on the point of frustration. Will it end in my death?"[284] Finally the God-enveloping love was vouchsafed to the Āḻyār. Such is the potency of weeping for God that a small child under a tamarind tree at Āḻvār-tirunakari was able to outgrow in love the big Brahman by the sheer strength of his loud lamentations in the ecstasy of an unfulfilled love felt for the lotus Feet of the Lord, Who was made to feel that even a remote Paramapada is not secure from the reach of the loud notes of a languishing and agonized soul below, pining away in love and crying aloud for the fulfilment of that love. Among the Saivite saints Māṇikkavācakar has won the distinctive title of "*Aḻutu Aḻutu Aṭiyaṭainta Aṉpaṉ*"[285] - 'One who reached God by the strength of his weeping'. The noble saint has prescribed weeping as a means for attaining God :"*aḻutāl uṉṉaip peṟalāmē*"[286] - 'I can attain Thee if wept'.

281. ibid. 6.5 : 4.
282. ibid. 6.9 : 9.
283. ibid. 8.2 : 7.
284. ibid. 8.5
285. *Parañcōtivār Tiruviḷaiyāṭal* - Maturai - k - kāṇṭam. St. 21.
286. T.V.K. 94.

The prayer takes sometimes the form of an yearning to see His fascinating figure.[287] Some of the prayers contain pleadings for protection.[288] The God shall not keep the devotee away but advise him as to how he should live happily.[289] On some occasions the Āḷvār expresses his difficulty to live without seeing Him[290] and requests to provide him with facilities for doing service.[291] He desires to know when He would allow him to be near Him[292] and be at His Feet.[293] He does not know when he would be able to go round Him and worship Him:[294] He prays to God that he must not be made to forget His enchanting divine form. More than rendering service to Him, he likes not to forget Him at any time.[295]

One important aspect of worship is that self should not feel simply satisfied with God's vision. "Its endearing love for Him must make it wish for the well-being of that vision, that is, shall treat the Lord as the most beloved person and offer prayers in order that evil eyes would not cast on Him to suffer that vision.[296] This is technically known as *'maṅgalāsāsanam'* and takes the form of a blessing denoted by such expressions as *'pallāṇṭu'*, *'vāḷi'* and *'pōṟṟi'*. This *'maṅgalā-śāsanam'* is also the means for removing the mental distress.[297] This is not the only direct result of this act. Happy life here is also assured by the constant performance of this act.[298] The act must really be made for the Feet of the Lord.[299]

287. T.V.M. 3.8: 7, 8.1: 1, 2; 8.9: 10.
288. ibid. 5.7.
289. ibid. 5.7: 7 to 9.
290. ibid. 5.8: 2; 7.1; 10.3.
291. ibid. 5.8: 8.
292. ibid. 5.10:2, 9; 7.6.
293. ibid. 6.10: 4.
294. ibid. 7.10: 1 to 4
295. P.Tv. 58.
296. ibid. 67; cf. T.V.C. 4.
297. ibid. 43.
298. ibid. 83.
299. ibid. 84.

Besides controlling the senses, one will have to put them to proper use. By control is meant the restraint put on the senses which attempt to get directed towards the sensuous objects. Once they are controlled, they cannot become defunct. They have to be used for spiritual purposes. The eyes, which are once set on the charming person of the Lord Who took the descents like the Dwarf and Kṛṣṇa, do not see any other object. The mouth, the organ of speech which shall be used for praising Him, would not like to taste any food and feel delight.[300] "My mouth will not greet any one but Him. The hands will not worship any one but Him Who measured the worlds. The eyes will not be set at any one but Him, the blue-complexioned Lord Who killed Pūtana. The ears will not listen to the expressions about any one but Him."[301] The only function for the tongue is to recite His names.[302] The sholuders would have served the purpose of their existence only by serving the Feet of the Lord.[303] Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār asks people to fold the palms, bend the head before Him and worship Him with flowers. Their mouth shall greet Him, eyes shall feast on Him and ears listen to His exploits.[304]

The intense experience of the Lord makes the Āḷvār take up the role of the bride and express what the Lord does not find interesting in her, than that limb or aspect of life shall be given up. Charm in the bride shall be considered to be purposeful, if it could be of use or could attract her lover.[305] Otherwise the bride loves interest in herself and life. Therefore the bride does not have any liking for complexion,[306] mind,[307] feminine modesty,[308] sweet colour,[309]

---

300. P. Tv. 52.
301. M. Tv. 11.
302. I. Tv. 38.
303. ibid. 43.
304. Nāṉ. Tv. 11.
305. cf. *Kumārasambhava*, 5.1.
306. T.V.M. 4.8: 1
307. ibid. 4.8: 2.
308. ibid. 4.8: 3.
309. ibid. 4.8: 4.

her own knowledge,[310] beauty[311] bangles,[312] waist girdle[313] body[314] and self[315] which have failed to attract Him. In a word, this decad is highly suggestive of the need to ignore the personal decorations and attractions on the part of the devotee. It is for this reason that the limbs are required to be used in serving God. The hands shall be folded to worship Him. The ears shall exist only for listening to the sweet utterances about Him. The tongue shall speak of His feet.[316] The prayer of the devotee shall be that his mouth shall always greet His feet. If this could happen at least in the future, the devotee need not worry about the past or the present.[317]

The Āḷvār emphasizes, both positively and negatively, the importance of our contemplation of God in inspiring His Grace. God blesses only those who have thoughts about Him and He hides from those who are devoid of this capacity. The Āḷvār says:

> "Meyyaṉ ākum virumpit toḻuvārkku ellām
> Poyyaṉ ākum puṟamē toḻuvārkku ellām"[318]

- 'To those who contemplate on Him as *upāya* with sincere heart He goes as the very Truth; to those who contemplate on Him for some material benefits, He does not reveal Himself in His true form.' He will be nearer to those who worship His Feet.[319] He goes away if one goes away from Him. He draws nearer if one approaches Him.[320] But to those who think of Him for a moment with a melting heart, He enters their heart and resides there taking it as His abode.

---

310. ibid. 4.8: 5.
311. ibid. 4.8: 6.
312. ibid 4.8: 7.
313. ibid. 4.8: 8.
314. ibid. 4.8: 9.
315. ibid. 4.8. 10.
316. M. Tv. 63; cf. ibid. 72.
317. Mū. Tv. 7.
318. T.V.M. 9.10: 7. cf. ibid. 10.4: 5.
319. ibid. 9.10: 8.
320. ibid. 1.7: 10.

"He came of His own accord, fascinated my lone heart and incorporated Himself in my body and in my soul."[321] "My lotus-eyed Lord will never shift from my heart."[322] The Lord is impossible of approach to those who do not approach Him with loving contemplation overflowing with devotion. Has not Śrī Kṛṣṇa said that He is the dice of the gamblers?[323] The Lord takes His abode in the mind of those who do not swerve from the right path. "(The Lord) stationed in my heart with love in order to destroy my *karma*" - "*En̲ val vin̲ai māyntu aṟa, nēcattin̲āl neñcamnāṭu kuṭikoṇṭān̲.*"[324]

The highest goal of man is *kaiṅkarya* or consecrated service to God through self-abnegation; it is the highest spiritual ambition of man in his religious experience. The self belongs to God, exists for His satisfaction and surrenders itself to His redemptive mercy. The moral self realizes its freedom by subduing the self or *ahaṅkāra*, attunes its will to that of Īśvara and views every *karma* as *kaiṅkarya*. Every deed is consecrated service to Īśvara, as *kaiṅkarya* and the gift of the self is the supreme *kaiṅkarya* to the Lord Who is its real Self and Redeemer. This ultimate solution of the Problem of Life is enunciated in a verse which Nampiḷḷai used to repeat:

"That soul indeed has reached bliss,
Which hath its nature realised:
Its nature:- 'Dependence of God';
Its end:- 'ternal service to Him'.[325]

Nammāḻvār refers to this service as "*antam-il aṭmai*" - 'endless service';[326] "*vaḻu ilā aṭimai*"[327] - 'spotless service'; and "*toṇṭu*"[328] - 'service'. The last verses of *Tiruvāymoḻi* hymns

---

321. ibid. 1.7: 7.
322. ibid. 10.6: 6.
323. Bh.G. 10:36.
324. T.V.M. 8.6: 4.
325. Bhag. Vis. Book IX. 9.4: (Commentary).
326. T.V.M. 2.6: 5.
327. ibid. 3.3: 1.
328. ibid. 9.8: 6; 10.4: 9.

give the results which will flow from a recitation of the hymns. The opportunity to perform *kaińkarya* is one among them as the following statements will show: "They will get the rare opportunity of service at His Feet";[329] "they will be able to do daily service to the Lord";[330] "they will be able to engage themselves in their daily service to the God with the discus";[331] "they will for ever be pleased with the service of the Lord";[332] "they will be redeemed from the sins of their previous births and will live to enjoy the great pleasures of service to God".[333]

Among the different modes of *bhakti* such as *dāsya-bhakti, sakhya-bhakti, vātsalya bhakti* etc., the attitude of a servant viz., *dāsya bhakti* is the best as it obtains a superior spiritual gain. To be more of the character of a servant is better fitted to win the master's mercy than to be objects o love like children to their father. Children but inherit portions of the master's property, but servants become objects of his strong affection. The former is but a material gain, whereas the latter is a superior spiritual gain. The efficacy of this *dāsya-bhakti* is brought out by the incident regarding the offence committed unwittingly by Piḷḷai Akaḷaṅka Brahma Rāya, the disciple of Kūrattāḷvāṉ, against the holy Parācara Paṭṭar, who left Śrī Raṅgam for Tirukkōṭṭiyūr on account of this and how reconciliation was brought out by one Iruṅkaimata - Vāraṇam the intimate servant of Paṭṭar serving as mediator in this case[334] Similarly

329. ibid. 3.4: 11.
330. ibid. 6.5: 11.
331. ibid. 7.3: 11.
332. ibid. 8.9: 11.
333. ibid. 4.1: 11.
334. Rāya was very anxious to conciliate with Paṭṭar. He sent Iruṅkai-mata-Vāraṇam to Tirukkōṭṭiyūr for this peace mission. Vāraṇam opportunely plied Paṭṭar in a coaxing language which pacified and pleased the holy *ācārya* so much as to deign forgive Rāya. When certain observers remarked about the exemplary way of bringing out this event by Vāraṇam, Paṭṭar said: "No wonder, He is a born servant (i.e. his very nature is made for service) which conquers all". (vide: *Iṭṭiṉ Tamiḻākkam*, Vol. IX. 9.4 : 10).

service to God as a servant to God excites His Grace. The self in the *dāsya-bhāva* very soon realizes its noumenal nature as a spiritual being and attains self-mastery and autonomy. The true meaning of the spiritual freedom thus won consists in the knowledge that the real author of all our actions is the Inner Ruler of all beings and in the dedication of every act of ours as the adoration of the highest Self. The motive of conduct is also shifted from the self to its Inner Self and every *karma* is consecrated as *kaiṅkarya*. In this way, according to Vedānta Deśika, the *śeṣa-śeṣi* relation between the finite and the infinite is transformed and deepened into the relation between servant and master, *dāsa* and *svāmin*, or servant and master.[335] When the spiritual self has attained this conception, it offers its freedom as a self-gift to God as the real Self or author of all activity; it attunes itself to the will of the infinite as the *sarva śeṣi* and *svāmin*. It further realises that there is no God but God and He alone is omnipotent and His will is eternally self-realized and also that every creature depends on His redemptive will for its being and function. But the self has the creature-consciousness that it is made in the image of God, and owes its nature and value to Him as the master. *Dāsyatva* or the idea of being a servant of God is thus the self's consciousnesss of the eternal self-dependence of Īśvara and the dependence of the self on Īśvara and its free submission to His redemptive purpose. It is also realized that the supreme goal of life is attained not in the natural world of *prakṛti* or in the spiritual world of *ātman*, but in the religious sphere of *Paramātman*. The idea of *śeṣi* gives the highest meaning to moral and spiritual experience as He is the means as well as the end of conduct. This is the true meaning of conduct as *kaiṅkarya*, and the highest freedom of life lies in the self-less service to the Supreme Who is the only Self without a second. That is the reason why the attitude of the slave has always been the richest ambition of the devotees of God Who do not feel it as loss of independence any more than the sovereign sitting on his throne and administering justice feels that the rules, laws and codes of mercy and justice he is dispensing bind him.

335. R.T.S. Ch. 3.

In the very notion of bondage to God, there is the notion of freedom and independence; for is it not God the very life – *antarātma* – of our lives?

The *svāmi-dāsa* relation is rooted in the living faith that God as *svāmin* alone is the Lord of our being, and in the feeling of the absolute dependence of the soul on Him. *Dāsyam* or service is not prostration to God as enforced obedience is the pathological expression of a slave mentality which makes Deity a capricious demoniacal despot and the creature a cringing crawling servitor. But it is the self-gift of the *ātman* that is not the slave of sense and sensibility, but is the autonomous sovereign of the ethical realm that exalts itself by submitting to the will of the *svāmin* and is the servent of God. The spiritual motive of Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa is the motto 'I serve', and the free man's worship is really like that of the wise Hanuman, who, by serving Rāma, His Lord, could conquer the whole universe.

Like Bharata[336] who conducted himself like a servant of a king before Śrī Rāma's sandals, the devotee should render service as to a king, with materials earned righteously. He should look upon this service as a wedded wife would look upon the careful custody of her sacred wedding-thread and the like. He should have the conviction that he has attained this ultimate aim of life, which begins from service to Bhagavāṉ and extends up to the service to His devotees, by his relationship with his good *ācārya*; for it has been said that Kṣhatrabandhu,[337] the great sinner, and Puṇḍarīka,[338] the virtuous

336. Rām. Ayodhya. 2.115 : 27.

337. Kṣhatrabandu led the life of a highway man in a forest. He was a source of terror to the sages who lived in that forest. Once when the sage Nārada happened to pass by him, he rushed at him with his stick. Nārada took pity on him and asked him to find out from his wife and children whether they would share the sin he was committing, as it was done for their sake. They refused and Kṣhatrabandhu realized his folly and begged to be instructed by Nārada in the truths of religion.

338. Puṇḍarīka was a virtuous brahmin, who, though he followed the righteous path and went on a pilgrimage to holy places, did not get a vision of God. It was only after being initiated into *Aṣṭākṣhara* by Nārada that he realised God.

attained *mokṣa* by having *ācāryas*. So also has it been said: "Our *ācaryas* are like bees which place us at the flower-like holy Feet of the Lord, Who is our Master and Who renders help to the Eternals"[339] and "If Viṣṇucittar (Periyāḷvār) who was born in the city of Villipputtūr and who was perfect in the qualities of the spirit, by some means in his power, makes the Lord appear before us, we can see";[340] in other words, without the grace of Viṣṇucittar, the *ācārya*, they cannot do anything themselves. The devotee should feel grateful to the Lord at the thought of His innate compassion which is the common and primary cause of all these and which, in the state of *mukti*; removes the dreaded possibility of a break in the enjoyment of Bhagavān Whose independent will cannot be questioned For it has been said by Periyāḷvār: "The Lord makes us climb to Vaikuṇṭha through the centre of the sphere of the sun whose rays dispel darkness and He removes the ladder that helped to climb, so that there may be no coming back",[341] and again, "If one goes to Vaikuṇṭha after performing *prapatti* by uttering the words '*Namō Nāraṇa*', He will not let one come back to the world of *samśāra*, even if one should furnish security for going back to Vaikuṇṭha".[342] Nammāḷvār says: "The firm Feet of Nārāyaṇa whose praise is unsurpassed" (the Feet being firm, those who have caught hold of them can never slip down);[343] and again, "Bhagavān is our Father who takes away from His devotees their future births, leads them to Vaikuṇṭha, helps the manifestation of their essential nature (*svarūpa*) and sees to their ever remaining under His Feet even like the lines on the soles (of His Feet)",[344] and further, he adds, "the Lord looks after our welfare by taking us to His Feet and by preventing our fall therefrom".[345] The devotee should feel grateful to the Lord of Lakṣmī, the *śeṣi*, Whose will is ever absolute and who, even

339. T.V.R. 54.
340. *Nāc. Tm.* 10.10.
341. *Periyāḷ. Tm.* 4.9: 3.
342. ibid. 4.5: 2.
343. T.V.M. 1.2: 10.
344. ibid. 3.7: 7.
345. ibid. 7.5: 10.

after *mokṣa*, shows the same compassion as during *saṃsāra*. Our Āḷvār says : "By Thy Grace and the Grace of Thy Spouse Who lives in the lotus, I served at Thy shrine".[346] A devotee shall attempt to any kind of service to God.[347] He shall not be trying to find out what sort of service could be done to God and what service he could take up. The devotee shall seek to take up any service, for any service to God is good as any other service.[348] Sweeping the gate of the Lord at Tiruvaṉanta-puram (now Trivandrum in the Keral State) is enough to remove the heinous sins.[349]

A figurative description of service is given by Nammāḷ-vār who states that his mind which is too closely attached to Him could be treated as the sandal paste fit for blue-hued frame[350]. His expressions are the garlands, silken cloth and ornaments for Him.[351] His self becomes the flower-wreath for his crest.[352] His love becomes ornaments, cloth and also glory for Him.[353] This hymn brings out the mystic bliss of the Lord which the Āḷvār had experienced and at the same time it shows that he had rooted out completely the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine' and also that he exists for His purpose.

The decad 4.4 of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is held to preach the cardinal principles of Vaiṣṇavism. Here the devotee who is a mystic after the manner of the bride, finds the Lord in everything through some trait found there which is treated to be related to God. If any one has smeared his forehead with a vertical line of the ashes then she treats him as the devotee of Viṣṇu.[354] This does not mean that ashes are to be used by the Vaiṣṇavites. It means only that anything that has the

346. ibid. 9.2 : 1.
347. ibid. 1.2 : 6.
348. ibid. 1.6 : 2.
349. ibid. 10.2 : 7: cf. 10.2: 6.
350. ibid. 4.3 : 1.
351. ibid. 4.3 : 2.
352. ibid. 4. 3: 4.
353. ibid. 4.3 : 5.
354. ibid 4.4: 7

vertical resemblance is treated as the *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* and as such denoting the person who has it as a Vaiṣṇavite.[355] Or, the word *'nīṟu'* shall be taken in the sense of the dust of the feet of the devotees of the Lord.[356] This interpretation gets support from another passage in the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[357] The real Vaiṣṇavite would not use the ashes but those who do not have the correct mode of conduct are found using the ashes.[358] In a different context,[359] the Āḷvār uses the word *'nīṟu'* with the attribute *'veḷīya'* which means the black pigment.[360] It can also mean the powder of *'paccai karppūram'*.[361] That the white mud alone is used by the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites is further evidenced by Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār obtaining this mud from the Lord of Tirumalai.[362]

Congregational prayer is another form of worship. The greatest contribution of Tamil Nad to the sphere of devotional music is the body of the hymns called *Tēvāram* of the Saivite lore and the *Nālāyiram* of the Vaiṣṇavite literature. From very ancient times the month of Mārkaḷi (November-December) has been considered especially sacred and appropriate for adoring the Lord and the Saivites and the Vaiṣṇavites have their own devotional recitals for this month, the *Tiruvempāvai* and the *Tiruppāvai;* and even special temple endowments were made for the latter in Cōḷa times[363] Similarly in the times of Rājarāja I, Rājēndra I, and Rājādhirāja endowments were made for the singing of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* at Uttaramērūr, Śrīraṅgam, Eṇṇāyiram and Tribhuvani.[364] A fifteenth century record in the former

355. Piḷḷāṉ on T.V.M. 4.4: 7.
356. *Saccaritrarakṣa*, p. 68.
357. T.V.M. 4.6: 6
358. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 4.4: 7.
359. T.V.M. 4.5: 6.
360. *Twelve Thousand* on ibid. 4.5: 6.
361. *Dramidopaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvaḷi* 4.5.
362. *Divyasūricaritam* 3.17.
363. Nos. 12 of 1905, 421 of 1912 and 128 of 1912.
364. Nos. 181 of 1923, 61 of 1892, 176 of 1923, 194 of 1923. 333 of 1917; and 557 of 1919.

Pudukottai State makes a gift of a village to the reciter of the hymns of Nammāḷvār.[365] This special adoration of the Lord through devotional singing in Mārkaḷi has continued to the present day. Parties of devotees get up early in the Mārkaḷi mornings, bathe despite the chill, and go round the local temple and the tank singing devotional songs. *Tiruppāvai*, as the author herself refers to as *'Caṅkat-tamiḷmālai'*[366] (a garland of verses to be sung in chorus) is intended only for group-singing. This practice is popularly called *bhajana*. While a few gifted singers, who led these *bhajana* parties, stopped at particular places to sing elaborate songs, there were *nāmāvaḷis* or simple strings of God's names and epithets which they uttered as they moved on and which the accompanying congregation took up in chorus. As each song or *nāmāvaḷi* was finished, the leader pronounced what is called *puṇḍarika*, an expression of devotion to God like *'Śitā-kāntasmaraṇam'* or *'Govinda nama saṅkirttanam'* to which the whole party would respond with formulas like *'Jaya Jaya Rāma'* and *'Govindā, Govindā'*. This *bhajana* was conducted in a more organized manner, within the precinct of *bhajana-maths*, everyday or on special week-days (in many places, Saturdays being preferred) or on holy days like the Ēkādaśi.

Sometimes a whole *bhajāna*-session was conducted for several days once or twice a year in a far more elaborate manner. This was usually done when the *bhāgavatas* would celebrate festivals, *utśavas*, of the marriage of Śītā-Rāma or of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. During these days the *bhāgvatas* go through their entire repertoire, Gopīka-gītā, the kīrtanas of Rāmdās and similar devotional songs. Besides these, they sing, during these festivals, special services of songs called *utśava-sampradāya kīrtanas* and songs invoking the Lord with simple addresses and epithets *divyanāma-saṅkīrtanas* to both of which the renowned saint-musician Tyāgarāja (1767–1847 A.D.) made an outstanding contribution and provided a rich musical medium for this method of worship. Some of these

365. No. 70 of 1909.

366. T.Pv. 30. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.4: 10.

are sung with a simple dance movement around a brass lamp-stand or *tuḷaci* pot, in imitation of the circular *rāsa*-dance. Some *utsava* specialists among these execute more difficult dances, carrying the lamp-stand or circumambulating it with their prostrate bodies. Large numbers of devout people of both sexes take part in these *bhajanas*.

There are several references in Nammāḷvār's poem to such rapturous, congregational worship. The Āḷvār says: "What is the use of those who do not sing the names of my Lord Kaṇṇaṉ, leap up and dance about in ecstasy? [367] Those who do not sing the Lord in strains full of music and leap and dance are sure to be born again and again in this mundane world.[368] Those who do not somersault in their rapturous repetition of the Lord's praises are bound to be plunged into Hell.[369] What use is the birth of such people among the good as do not sing the real praises of Śrīdhara and dance in ecstasy headside down without restraint? [370] Those such as do not praise the Lord extolled in the *Vedas* and walk the streets forgetting themselves in chanting His praise, however great their scholarship might be, do not deserve to be called men.[371] Those who celebrate the Lord, and caper in their enthusiasm are as good as the all-knowing.[372] Those who fail to praise the Lord and to dance about in the rapture of devotion are not likely to do any service to the devotees, and are there only to feed and fatten themselves.[373] Even the Eternals worship those who constantly blabber the names of the Lord both in solitude and in company and frisk about in extremes of devotion and love of God so that the others call them mad and laugh at them".[374] In another place he says

367. T.V.M. 3.5: 1.

368. ibid. 3.5: 2.

369. ibid. 3.5 : 3.

370. ibid. 3.5 :4 .

371. ibid 3.5 : 5.

372. ibid. 3.5 : 6.

373. ibid. 3.5 : 7.

374. ibid. 3.5 : 8. cf. Perum. Tm. 3: 8.

that the world is full of the devotees of the Lord who constantly chant His names, sing His praises and dance about, and lose themselves in the rapture of devotion.[375]

The devotees of the Lord have to follow a course of action which is faultless and agreeable. They should observe the code of conduct prescribed for their *varṇa* and their *āśrama* and for the sake of delight in the enjoyment of the auspicious qualities of the Lord; they should study *Vedānta* with good men, should teach the sweet and noble utterances of the Āḷvārs always and also listen to the religious discourses. They should follow this line of conduct as long as they live. The following passages from the *Nalāyiram* indicate the line of conduct: "I read the books which describe the attributes and qualities of Bhagavān; I listened to other people reading them; I bowed to Him, I worshipped Him always and performed service to Him and thus saw to it that my time was not spent in vain".[376] "Men should get rid of their sorrow which is as deep as the sea on account of past *karma* surrounding the soul, by meditating on those passages which reveal the Lord's qualities. If they should not do so, by what other thought can they get rid of their sorrow while in *samsāra*?"[377] "We should without intermission render service to the Lord in all places and in all circumstances and at all times".[378] "If the Lord is so gracious as to enable me to spend my time always with the passages which describe His qualities in my mouth, with His form alluring the eye and other senses in my mind, and with flowers fit enough for His form in my hands – if I find this grace, what is there unpleasant for me while living here?"[379] "This is the only object that I desire – that the Lord should take me into His service for His own satisfaction"[380]. "I do not long for birth accompanied with wealth that only

---

375. ibid. 5.2
376. Nāṉ. Tv. 63.
377. P. Tv. 86.
378. T.V.M. 3.3: 1.
379. ibid. 8.10: 4; cf. ibid., 1.4: 9; 9 2: 10.
380. ibid. 2.9: 4; cf. T.Pv. 29; Nāc. Tm. 4: 1; Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 3.

makes the flesh grow but pray to be born as a heron in the sacred *Puṣkaraṇi* in the Vēṅkaṭa Hills"[381]

A devotee should not remain complacently ignorant of what should be known in that state, on the presumption that he has already known what should be known. Knowledge and love are both essential for the perfect enjoyment of the Lord. Therefore be should not beg of the Lord any thing but knowledge and love for His holy Feet. Periyāḷvār says: "The Lord of the yellow raiment (*pītaka āṭaip pirāṉār*) has incarnated as the *guru* to teach the *Vedas*"[382] So the devotee should learn from such *ācāryas* possessed of exclusive devotion to the Lord and having a clear knowledge of the truth. He should obtain clear knowledge from them by following the injunction of the *Gītā*. "Learn that by humble reverence, by enquiry and by service. The men of wisdom who have seen the truth will instruct thee in knowledge".[383] He should have his knowledge rendered clear and pure, as Kāḷidāsa says, even a man that is dull becomes intelligent by seeking the company of the wise as muddy water becomes clear and pure by being mixed with the lather from soap-nut.[384] It has been said: "He whose knowledge of the truth (concerning Bhagavāṉ) extends up to the enjoyment of the Lord – all those who fall within the range of his eyes will be purified of all their sins".[385] So a devotee should live in close contact with such men who are well established in this knowledge. "In a tank which is intended for all and for various purposes, one should take only as much of the water as is required for one's purposes".[386] So a devotee should determine what he should choose, from among their ways of life and conduct, what is in accordance with his *varṇa*, his *āśrama*, his *gotra*, his character and the like and conduct himself in keeping with that determination. He should walk warily lest he should fall into the pitfall of think-

381. Perum. Tm. 4:1.
382. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.2: 8.
383. Bh. G. 4: 34.
384. *Māḷavikāgnimitra*. 2.7.
385. Sātt. Sam. cited in RTS. Ch. 15.
386. Bh. G. 2: 46.

ing of his own superiority and the inferiority of others, which might arise from his conceit while observing this code of conduct.

Even if, as it occured to such great men of yore as Nammāḻvār and Nāthamuni, the devotee is blessed with the special grace of the Saviour so as to enjoy the rise of such benefits as the vision of the Lord, he should feel sure that it is not due to any merit of his own as Periyāḻvar says "I do not know what is good and what is bad"[387] and "Even if I know what is good and what is evil, I cannot obtain what is good and avoid what is evil". He should see to it that his being destitute of all *upāyas* (*ākiñcanya*) which is due to his *svarūpa*, his maintenance (*sthithi*) and his activities (*pravritti*) being entirely dependent on the Lord does not suffer any change or loss. He should remember his utter helplessness (*kārpaṇya*) as described in the *śloka* "I am the abode of all transgressions, I have no means of protecting myselt and I have nothing else to attain than Thee",[388] and in such verses of the Āḻvārs as: "I have not seen observing the code of the disciplined life, nor have I keen intelligence",[389] "What can I do? Who will protect me?",[390] "May my misery be put an end to by Thee! If Thou doest not do so, there is no one else to protect me",[391] "I have no other *upāya* and no other protector", [392] I do not know of any one whom I can hold as the Saviour of my soul",[393] "We are such as ignorant women belonging to the race of cowherds who eat in forests while grazing the cows there"[394], "I have given up the rites pertaining to brahmins of worshipping the three fires after ablutions",[395] "I was not born in any of the four castes wherein one is fit to

387. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.1: 3.
388. Ahir. Sam. 3: 30.
389. T.V.M. 5.7: 1.
390. ibid. 5.8: 3.
391. ibid. 5.8: 8.
392. ibid. 6.10: 10.
393. ibid. 10. 10: 3.
394. T. Pv. 28.
395. T.M. 25.

follow *dharma*",[396] "I am ignorant and of low birth"[397], "I have no one to seek for support",[398] "Even if Thou dost not remove from me the sufferings due to *karma*, I have no other refuge than Thee"[399], "I have not practised *karma-yoga*; I have not understood the real nature of the disembodied self i.e., I have not performed *jñāna-yoga*; nor have I *bhakti* towards Thy holy Feet".[400] The devotee should realise his own helplessness by remembering the statements as embodied in the verses of the Āḷyārs.

Owing to the knowledge of his own unfitness from time immemorial and the loss of the Lord's service which resulted from it, which may cause excessive disgust, the devotee should not fall into despair which make one lament in the words of the Āḷvār saying, "The nature of the man in *samsāra* is such that he identifies himself with the perishing body and calls it 'I'; from it arises also evil conduct and from it arises again the body that is foul".[401] Without falling into despair he should hearten himself with the latter part of the same verse: "O Lord of the immortals, Thou wast born into all castes and even from the wombs of animals in Thy eagerness to protect the *jivas*": He should comfort himself with the words of the Saviour to Arjuna as "For the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked and so also for the establishment of *dharma* I am born again and again in every *yuga*".[402] He should bathe and dive deep, as it were, in the words of Bhagavāṉ which reveal the secret of the *avatāras* and take courage: "Whatever a man may have been in the past, if he lives a righteous life in his old age, it will do him good; his evil deeds in the past will do him no harm"[403] and "A man may have been wicked in his past life; he may have fed on anything

396. Tc. V. 90.
397. Peri. Tm. 5. 8: 1.
398. ibid. 1. 1: 9.
399. Perum. Tm. 5:1.
400. *Śtotra-ratna* 22.
401. T.V.R. 1.
402. Bh. G. 4: 8.
403. Bhōd. Dh. Sūt. 14: 10.

(however impure); he may have been ungrateful; he may have been a sceptic; in spite of all that, if he earnestly seeks the protection of the Lord, Who is the cause of the world, know that man is faultless owing to the Lord's greatness"[404]. "In one half of an instant, a *jiva* commits a sin which cannot be expiated even in the course of ten thousand *kalpas* of Brahmā. But Thou pardonest him if only he gives up the thought of sinning again, even though he has transgressed. "How wonderful this is!"[405] "The past is past, what can we do concerning it? The wise man should think of erecting the dam, even when the water is flowing".[406] "It is good to die after performing *prapatti* to the Lord at least in the dying moments".[407]

In accordance with what has been said above, the devotee should not lament over the past. He should not run away at the thought of his past unfitness. He should make himself fit for the future by reflecting on the present fitness which has resulted from the infinite greatness of the Saviour which brooks no questioning, like those who construct a dam for the water that will come up in the future. He should not stray from the path of performing the commands and permissions of the Lord which are in keeping with his present state as a devotee. As described by Nammāḷvār,[408] the senses which have become tired with expectations of enjoying the Lord should be rendered fit to enjoy Him by means of pure food and service and directed towards such spiritual experiences as are available and turned away from the desire for unwholesome objects, like cows that are turned away from stealthily eating the crops.

Vedānta Deśika illustrates the condition of the devotee by means of a beautiful analogy.[409] When people

---

404. Sātt. Sam. 16: 23, 24.
405. *Vaikuṇṭhastava*. 61.
406. Vaṅkipuram Nampi : *Kārika* 31.
407. T.V.M. 1.3: 8.
408. ibid. 3.8.
409. R.T.S. Ch. 15.

are waiting for the boat in order to cross the stream to go to a place of their desire, some of them may avoid playing chess or other game with stakes, as it could not be stopped whenever desired but may be engaged in playing the game without any stakes so that they might be in a position to give up the game when the boat has come. Though they play merely for the enjoyment and not for money, they move the pawns on the board in strict accordance with the rules of the game. In the same way though the devotee does not expect any profit out of it. he performs gladly the rites commanded and permitted by the Lord, which are really services to Him, in accordance with the specific time and place at which they are ordained for performance. In performing them, he should resemble not those who drink milk for relief from excess of bile, but like those who have got well easily and quickly with the help of a medicine and who drink milk with pleasure, not as a cure for disease.

It has been pointed out that a *bhāgavata* has, by nature, the sole character of a *śeṣa* to Bhagavāṉ and he takes delight in rendering service to Him. It is not at all likely that he will offend against the Lord. If as a result of a past *karma* which has begun to operate (*prārabdha*) and under adverse conditions of place, time and circumstance slight offences against the Lord take place, through inattention in the waking state or in dreamless sleep and other such states those offences will disappear without causing any stain. Again as the devotee is in close association with *prakṛti* like one who lives under the same roof with a serpent,[410] it is just possible that, owing to his deficiency in spiritual qualities, certain lapses might, as in the case of weak-hearted *ṛṣis*, even occur with his knowledge. If such lapses do occur, the Lord of Mahālakṣmī Who, by His very nature, is his well-wisher, stands ever ready to save him. These lapses in his actions will therefore be momentary like lightning; he will quickly reflect on these lapses from his state as a devotee, feel ashamed at them, repent of them, and perform proper atonement (*prāyacitta*) that is suited to his competence. "If there

410. Peri. Tm. 11.8: 3.

is offence the atonement that is to be done is only the performance of *prapatti* again. If, after performing *prapatti* for the sake of *mokṣa*, a man should perform *karma-yoga* and the like with the thought that these are *upāyas* (to *mokṣa*), it would also constitute an offence. In order that this offence might disappear, *prapatti* alone should be performed again."[411] "Whether a man commits an offence knowing that it is an offence or does it without knowing it to be one, the only atonement that has to be performed is to beg in these words: 'Pardon the offence."[412] If the devotee does not obtain pardon by atonement, he will not go to the world of Yama, but receive punishment in this very life. For it has been said: "Seeing his attendants with the noose of death in their hands Yama whispers in their ears: "Do not approach those who have performed *prapatti* at the Feet of Madhusūdana. I have sway only over others and not over the devotees of Viṣṇu"[413] and again "O Thou with lotus-like eyes, O Vāsudeva, O Viṣṇu, O Thou that bearest the earth, O Thou that art armed with the conch and the discus, be Thou my refuge - those who utter these words, - leave them at a distance for they are not the sinners"[414] and further "Those that perform *prapatti* to Viṣṇu, the God Who is armed with a bow, never go to the world of Yama, for Hell is not their dwelling place".[415] As stated in these treatises the offenders do not go to the land of Yama, but are punished with the blindness of an eye, or the lameness of a leg, or some such thing and thus relieved of their burden of sin. They will be punished in this life itself here. The Supreme Lord, being possessed of forgiveness, kindness, compassion and over-flowing love, relents in His anger and protects the devotee after light punishment for his offence. Even in the case of deliberate offence the punishment is not severe. When the offences have been committed, atonement also will have to be made in

---

411. L.T. 17: 91, 92.
412. The Verses of Vaṅkipuram Nampi, 520.
413. Vām. P. 94: 31.
414. Yama's words. V.P. 3.7: 33.
415. Vām P. 94: 43.

public. This is for the sake of setting an example to the rest of the world. If it were not done, it would be a transgression of the Lord's command.

The atonement is prescribed only for a sin that has already been committed. If a man dreads the possibility of future sins committed deliberately, he should perform atonement in the form of a *prapatti* for the sins of the past life which have begun to operate and which are the causes of these possible future sins. It has been said: "The sins committed in previous births afflict a man in the present life as diseases. They can be got rid of by medicines, charitable gifts, *japa*, offerings to the fire (*homa*) and adoration of Bhagavān."[416] It is indeed stated here that, even by *japa* and *homa*, the sins of the past which have begun to bear fruit in the present life can be destroyed. Such being the case, there is no reason to doubt that *prapatti* can destroy such sins. Therefore if a man performs *prapatti* in dread of the possibilities of future sins which might be caused by the sins of the past, these can be got rid of and no such future sin will be deliberately committed.

It is, therefore, clear that the process ultimately consists in purifying the mind and the heart, a sort of catharsis. When one thinks of Him for a moment, He makes that heart as his abode. If the mind is oriented towards Him, He rushes into it. If the soul is hungering for God, God is also hungering for the soul. Nammāḻvār speaks of this experience: "When I stood tip-toe eager to swallow Him up, He, Who had put the idea into my head, came of His own accord and devoured me into Himself".[417] "The very hearing of the name of the Lord" says the Āḻvār, "brings tears to my eyes. I searched for Him, but He has been there with me always".[418] This is a statement reminding us of the Prophet Mahomet's saying, "When man walks towards God, God runs towards him". It looks as though He has no grandeur elsewhere.

416. *Āḻavantār Śtotra* 4.
417. T.V.M. 9.6: 10.
418. ibid. 1.10: 8.

Again, the Āḷvār says: "The Lord, reclining on the ocean of milk, without minding the fact that I am so lowly that I do not deserve His grace, has entered into me on His own initiative and relishes me day and night".[419] Dependence on the Feet of the Lord will wipe out age long sins.[420] Constant relishing of the nectar-like Lord has dispelled the delusions due to birth into the world.[421] "My soul has made contact with the Scion of the Yādavas and has merged with Him inseparably".[422] "The Lord Who mixes butter with His hands and eats up every day has merged with my body".[423] "By contemplation of Thee and by singing of Thy praises I could divest myself of my age-old sins".[424] "The Lord is like insatiable nectar to me every moment, every day, every month, year and *kalpa* ".[425] "Now that the Lord has entered my heart, the former inhabitant there, my *karma* has no longer room for itself there, and has to quit".[426] Afraid of the fierceness of *karma*, I offered praise to the Lord through my verses"[427] "To herd together the five senses which rule over the heart and to quell them and to drive them afield".[428] "Now the five senses which were once fiercely dominating me have left me hanging their hands in shame".[429] "Redeemed by Thee, and having got rid of heinous sins, I entered Thy eternal service. There is no leaving this state hereafter".[430] "After repeatedly undergoing a number of births, I reached Thy feet, cleansed my mind and got immersed in the ocean of bliss".[431] Again the saint says: "Thou shouldst remove every trace of

419. P. Tv. 81.
420. T.V.M. 1.3: 8.
421. ibid. 1.7: 3.
422. ibid. 1.7: 9.
423. ibid. 1.8: 5.
424. ibid. 2.6: 6
425. ibid. 2.5: 4.
426. P.Tv. 30.
427. ibid. 45.
428. ibid. 51.
429. ibid. 69.
430. T.V.M. 2.6: 5.
431. ibid. 2.6: 8

fascinating *samsāra* which is of Thy making and enable me to contemplate and worship Thy divine weapons and auspicious form in thought, word and deed".[432] "The Lord of myself as much as the Lord of the Eternals, ... has in an instant removed my age-long sins".[433] "I strayed in the path of the pleasure of the body which Thou gavest me. When can I attain to Thee, after a period of remorseful realization during which I could get rid of *karma*?"[434] The same sentiment is expressed in the next verse also.[435] The Āḷvār continues further: "Delicious as insatiable nectar to my life and body, Thou rulest over me, to the destruction of my *karma*".[436] He prays: "Unite me unto Thy feet adorned with flowers",[437] and he asks the Lord, "How can I adequately contemplate the great help of the Lord in wiping out my sins, cleansing me, merging with me, and, above all, making me celebrate Him in verses as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha?[438] The whole decad is in the same strain. "I do not know" says the Āḷvār, "how my soul which is lost in the affairs of the three worlds can find its way to effulgent Thee at Vaikuṇṭha".[439] Again he says: "My Lord who destroys root and branch the two-fold *karma* and keeps the soul distinct from the body redeems His devotees".[440] "The Lord ever removes the two-fold *karma* and reigns over me".[441] He prays to the Lord: "Even if Thou showest not Thy grace to me, make me an object which can stay near Thy feet".[442] "Thou, the Lord of Tiruviṇṇakar, if Thou grantest me to worship Thee, I shall give up my desire for family life"[443]-

432. ibid. 7.1: 8.
433. ibid. 8.4: 3.
434. ibid. 3.2: 1.
435. ibid. 3.2: 2.
436. ibid. 5.8: 10.
437. ibid. 6.10: 4.
438. ibid. 7.9: 7.
439. ibid. 7.6: 5.
440. ibid. 9.3: 8.
441. ibid. 10.4: 2.
442. ibid. 9.8: 8.
443. Peri. Tm. 6.1: 1.

this offer to reject family life is repeated as a refrain in all the verses of the hymn. Tirumaṅkaiyālvār says: "I developed tolerance and indifference to blame; I gave up the pleasures of the senses, exhausting them, and wealth and desire; I have abandoned love and hate alike. I have surrendered at Thy Feet".[444] "I forgot Thee: therefore in that forgetfulness, I fell into the pit of birth, and suffered. Now I am fit for surrender at Thy Feet".[445] "Having realised that mate and children cannot stand by me at the hour of judgement, I gave up contact with them; wielding the weapon of absolute surrender which is Thy gift, I get rid of the trouble brought by the five senses and reach Thy Feet"[446] "Having realised that the greatest of kings have gone the way of all flesh, I gave up interest in mundane life and seek Thy Feet"[447] and "the fiery mouthed. fell sins stayed by me like my relations and were about to throw me into Hell. Therefore I seek Thy help".[448] "Those who lead blameless and sinless lives constantly praying to Thee live happily"[449] Again Pūtattāḷvār says: "O heart! you have realised the evil nature of *samsāra*; you have experienced its ills; you have developed a repulsion towards *samsāra*".[450] According to Nammāḷvār, those who have grasped the hundred verses of *Tiruviruttam* will not get stuck in the bog of birth due to *karma*.[451] He again refers to the purification of mind as one of the results flowing from the recitation of his hymns. The minds of those who recite his *Tiruvāymoḷi* hymns, according to the Āḷvār, will be rendered pure;[452] they will be blessed with clarity of mind

---

444. ibid. 6:2: 1.
445. ibid. 6.2: 2.
446. ibid. 6.2: 4.
447. ibid. 6.2: 5. cf, Paṭṭinattār's statement: "Even the great kings are, at the end, reduced to a handful of ashes......". *(Paṭṭiṉattār Pāṭalkaḷ* Tiruttillai. 7).
448. ibid. 6.2: 7.
449. I.Tv. 20.
450. ibid. 66.
451. T.V.R. 100.
452. T.V.M. 5.2: 11.

amidst the encircling gloom of the world.[453] Further, the Āḷvār eays : "My heart and I have agreed upon the need for dispelling the evil *karma*".[454] Even the Lord taking possession of the Āḷvār's heart, is due to His Grace only.[455] Once the Lord takes possession of his heart, the Āḷvar does not think that he thinks, he acts or he sees, or he moves in the world; God alone thinks, lives and moves thereafter. In this connection one is reminded of what St. Paul has said : "It is not I that live, but Christ dwelleth in me".

It is thus seen that worship of the Deity has a particular meaning in the Vaiṣṇavite school. Acts of worship, whatever form they take, are reducible to the level of service (*kaiṅkarya*) to God Service (*aṭimai*) as the Āḷvārs conceive of, is to be rendered to *Puruṣottama* and as such does not have any disadvantage or inconvenience attached to the result as understood in the ordinary sense of the term. This position cannot be objected to on the ground that dependence on another is painful,[456] for what another is for depending upon is to be explained through the real nature of the self. The selves acquire the physical frames of the tiger, deer, cow, man, bird and another species due to *karma*. Being distinct from the body, the self is of the nature of consciousness and its nature is to be subsidiary to the Lord. Those who have not realized this truth may have notions such as 'I am a tiger', 'I am a man', 'I am a master', 'I am a servant' and so on. The relation of *śeṣa* and śeṣi justifies that any other relation between the self and God would declare pain as the only result of service. The Lord is of the nature of bliss Every other thing becomes pleasurable or painful due to circumstances.[457] Dependence on such things would lead only to pain. Service that is rendered to an unworthy person will necessarily lead to pain. The Lord is the most deserving person and as such is to be served by all at all times. The Lord

453. ibid. 7.5: 11.
454. P.Tv. 26.
455. T.V.M. 8.8: 3.
456. cf. *Mānuśmṛti*: 4. 160.
457. V.P. 2.6: 47.

Himself declared: "He, who serves me, following the path of undivided *bhakti*, transcends these qualities (of *prakṛti*) and will attain self-realization".[458] He, being the storehouse of unlimited bliss, would enable the devotee partake of His bliss and make him happy.[459] The bridal aspect of love, which provides the woman with more joy due to her passivity and willing subservience and thus enables her to find delight in pleasing her lover through service, adds to the charm of the aspect of Worship as *kaiṅkarya*. Worship is thus delectable and is therefore cherished as life's purpose, beyond which there is nothing that a devotee could wish for.

Kaiṅkarya is to be undertaken by a devotee to the Lord in any of His forms. Since the *para*, *vyuha*, and *antaryāmin* are not within the easy reach of the mortals, the Vaiṣṇavite school has performed to enjoin service to the deity in the *vibhava* and *arcā* forms. Of course, neither the *Āgamas* nor the Āḻvārs have expressed any preference to the *arcā* form of worship to the exclusion of other forms. The Āḻvārs often draw a synthesis of these five forms and are ever reminding us that it is impossible to think of one form without reference to the other. The *ācāryas* have suitably presented a form of worship in *arcā* where the Āḻvārs find the *vibhava* forms of God[460] and recommended it for doing *kaiṅkarya*.[461] It is this aspect of doing service that assumed prominence in the days after the Āḻvār period. Hence it is that Maṇakkāl Nampi took Āḷavantār to Śrī Raṅgam for service. Thereafter, Śrī Raṅgam became the ideal place for doing service and after its model, other shrines also gained importance as places for the rendering of service by the devotees.

458. Bh. G. 14 : 26.
459. cf. *Vedārthasamgraha*, pp. 244-250.
460. cf. Peri. Tm. 7.2: 2; Mū. Tv. 34.
461. T.V.M. 3.3; Peri. Tm. 2.1; A.P. 10; R.T.S. ch. 15.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CULT OF BHĀGAVATAS

The *Gita* speaks of four kinds of devotees of the Lord. The affilicted, those in distress, who pray to Him for deliverence from misery are one class. Those who adore God for the object of knowing Him constitute the second class. Others who pray to Him for the attainment of objects of desire form the third category. The fourth are the wise man (*jñānis*) who are devoted to God for the sake of devotion only. The Lord says: "Of these, the wise devotee is ever in constant union with Me in thought and is attached to Me with single-minded devotion. For I am supremely dear to him and he is also dear to Me".[1] The *Mahābharata* also speaks four classes of devotees[2] of whom three are desirous of rewards while the best are the single-minded worshippers. Others ask for favours, but the sage asks nothing and refuses nothing. He yields himself completely to the Divine accepting whatever is given to him. His attitude is one of self-oblivious non-utilitarian worship of God for His own sake. It is the blessing of such great and lofty Mahātmas who are the walking gods of this earth that can elevate ordinary mortals like us and make it possible even for us to love, and be loved by God. And hence does Yāmunācārya invoke their loving and gracious *katākṣa* upon himself as the surest way of becoming one of the chosen devotees of the Lord: "O Lord; grant that I may be recipient of the gracious glances of those Mahātmas, who, in their intense longing to behold thy repturous Form once, reject the pleasures of the earth and the promises of the Paramapada, and separation from whom even for a moment is to Thee is most sufferable".[3]

---

1. Bh. G. 7: 17.
2. M.Bh. śānti. 341. 13.
3. *Śtotra-ratnam* - 56.

Bhakti is meditation on Brahman touched with love. It is absolute devotion to Bhagavāṉ as the life of our life and is love for love's sake. The true *bhakta* is a true *jñāni*. He knows clearly well that God alone is the source and sustenance of life. So he meditates on Him as his self and cultivates exclusive devotion to Him. This state of *bhakti* is known as *ēkabhakti* as his devotion is controlled by the single idea of attaining *mukti*. It comes to one unsolicited by the Grace of God and sacrifice. Upon gaining it, man realizes his perfection and divinity, and becomes throughly contended. He desires nothing more. He is then free from grief and hatred. He does not rejoice over anything, nor does he exert himself in the furtherance of self-interest. The realization makes him intoxicated and fascinated as it were, because he is completely immersed in the bliss of Paramātman. Says Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyālvār: "Iccuvai tavira yāñ pōy intira-lōkam āḷum, accuvai peṟinum vēṇṭēṉ"[4] – 'I do not desire even the pleasures of *svarga* except the pleasure (of meditating of Lord)'. Kulacēkatāḷvār goes a step further by saying, "Paṭiyāyk kiṭantu uṉ pavaḷavāy kāṇpēṉē" – 'Remaining as a stepping stone in the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord I shall enjoy the beauty of Your coral lips'.[5] Nammāḷvār's devotion to Lord is supreme. "Let it be that I may attai *mokṣa* or reach the place of heaven or hell, but I will go on meditating the Lord unceasingly without ever forgetting Him" says the Āḷvār.[6] One is reminded in this connection of Cēkkilār's tribute to the greatness of these devotees. Their mind, according to him, is pure and white like the sacred ash besmeared on the body. Even if the elements go astray, their minds will not swerve from the love of God. To them gold and potsherd are the same. They care not even for *mokṣa*, if only they could be assured of loving worship. They have no burden other than the service of the Lord, these merciful lovers and heroes wanting in nothing.[7] Saivism refers to these devotees as 'Paramaṉaiye pātuvār' (the singer of the Lord).

---

4. T.M. 2.
5. Perum. Tm. 4: 9.
6. T.V.M. 2.9: 5.
7. P.P. Introduction part 6 to 8.

A devotee, who leads the ideal life by rendering service to God, is required to avoid two pitfalls which generally take those who are not aware of them. One is the company of the wicked and the other is offending God. Those who are deceitful, do not do their duty, and are boreft of the knowledge of ultimate Reality, are declared to be wicked.[8] In a way, they are different from the good whose mind is set in *Puruṣottama* and so are free anger, envy, greed and evil thought.[9] A good man who is devoted to Hari. will not desire for what belongs to another, and will not cultivate friendship with those who are mean and who, though not intending to do harm, support the sinners in their acts. He will spend his time who are righteous and would not extol any one except Tirumāl (Viṣṇu)[10]. Kulacēkarāḷvār's third hymn enumerates the mental attitudes and activities of such people who deserve to be classed as bad. Such persons prefer to live with the enticing material world.[11] They like most the company of woman.[12] They are interested in food and clothing only.[13] To this Āḷvār, others are mad and to them he is mad.[14] Tirumaṅkaiyaḷvār refers to his resolve not to take note of the existence of those who do not think of the Lord at Tirukkaṭalmallai.[15] Those who do not become the servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are not to be treated as man.[16] The contact with such people, even if had for worldly purposes would change the devout persons into atheists. The other source of danger to the religious life is *apacāra*. The word '*apasāra*' means swerving from the path prescribed by God in the form of *Vedas* and *Śmṛtis*. Besides, in the real sense of religious life, to think of any other deity as equal to

---

8. *Manuśmṛti,*: 4: 30; *Yajñavālkyaśmṛti* 1. 130.
9. M. Bh. Anuśasana 232: 135.
10. M.Tv. 64.
11. Perum. Tm. 3: 1.
12. ibid. 3: 2, 3.
13. ibid. 3: 4.
14. ibid 3: 8.
15. Peri. Tm. 2. 6: 1.
16. ibid. 11.7: 9.

or superior to Nārāyaṇa constitutes the greatest guilt.[17] One shall also avoid offending the devotees of God. Some may sometimes be tempted to treat the Lord as powerless and so fit to be insulted. Nammāḷvār cites the attempt of Pūtana to kill Kṛṣṇa which brought her own end.[18] Activities of this kind are to be treated as insulting God who, however, would not get offended, but would delay in showing His grace after enforcing a light punishment on the offender.

The best characteristic of a devotee is the philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism. Vaiṣṇavites are those who are in a way related to Viṣṇu who is *vibhu*, all pervasive. Therefore it becomes logically true that no one can exist without any relation to Viṣṇu. A true Vaiṣṇavite will realize this truth, basic principle. He will show true love and render service to one whether one is a friend or foe. The mention of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya's statement is relevant to the context. He says : "One should exercise forbearance, show sympathy with a smile and appreciation to those who have done evil; and also one should take it for granted that they have extended their help".[19] This idea must have been prevalent prior to the period of that great *ācārya* among the Vaiṣṇavites and attained the status of a *mahāvākya* (significant statement) at his times. An incident in Parācara Paṭṭar's life may throw a clear light on the statement. One day Paṭṭar was standing in the Raṅganātha's sanctum sanctorum in a mood of self-examination. Without noticing his presence there, some heaped abuse after abuse on him. This saddened the hearts of *bhaktas* who were standing with Paṭṭar. But to the surprise and wonder of all the devotees present there, Paṭṭar presented his ring to one of those who abused him; he further blessed the one who abused him most with the honour of covering him by his gold-laced cloth. To them Paṭṭar said : "Don't think that I have made presents to them on account of the fear of their abuses". This statement increased their surprise and wonder. He further added: "I should be thankful to them for the help

17. Peri. Tm. 8.10: 3; cf. Nan. Tv. 68.
18. P.Tv. 14.
19. S.V.P. Ch. 3. Sūt. 122.

they have rendered to me by bringing to the notice of the Lord the mistakes which I was not conscious of and thereby helping in my self-examination". This utterance moved not only his friends but his foes as well. Tiruvaḷḷuvar suggests the novel method of punishing those who have done wrong to one: "Iṉṉā ceytārai oṟuttal avar nāṇa, naṉṉayam ceytu viṭal"[20]- 'The (proper) punishment to those who have done evil (to you) is to put them to shame by showing them kindness in return and to forget both the evil and the good done on both sides'. This teaching of the Tamil saint could have been responsible for shaping the life of the Vaiṣṇavites. The arrogance born of one's learning, wealth and high birth should have no place in a true Vaiṣṇavite. This has been metaphorically referred to by Amutaṉār as "Vañca mukkurumpām kuḻi"[21] - 'a vile trap-like triple pit'. He is really a Vaiṣṇavite, who while listening to the harsh expressions uttered by a devotee, bows to him and addresses him patiently.[22] Without the use of the word *'vaiṣṇavite'* Nammāḻvār states that the trait of those who possess good qualities consists in rendering service to the Feet of the Lord, after controlling the mind and the five senses.[23] With keen religious insight, Pūtattāḻvār declares that kings who, before our presence, ride on horses, must be occupying their positions not by accident. They must have worshipped the feet of the Lord in their various previous births with flowers.[24] This is the only explanation that could be given to show how some people are able to occupy prosperous positions. Any position which an individual occupies is due to the will of God and the position of the kings can be no exception to this. The character of a true Vaiṣṇavite is also enshrined in the famous song of the true Vaiṣṇavite which was made popular by Mahātma Gandhi:

> "He is the true Vaiṣṇava who knows and feels
> Another's woes as his own

---

20. *Kuṟal.* 314; cf. *Manuśmṛti* 6: 43; M.Bh. Śānti-300: 10, 12, 16, 18.
21. R.N. 7.
22. *Liṅgapurāṇam.* 2.4: 9, 10
23. P.Tv. 51.
24. I. Tv. 69.

Ever ready to serve, he never boasts
He bows to every one and despises no one,
Keeping his thought, word, and deed pure,
Blessed is the mother of such an one. He
Reverences every woman as his mother.
He keeps an equal mind and does not
Stain his lips with falsehood; nor
Does he touch another's wealth.
No bonds of attachment can hold him.
Ever in tune with *Rāma nāma* his body
Possesses in itself all places of pilgrimage
Free from greed and deceit, passion
And anger, this is the true Vaiṣṇava :"

Nammāḷvār speaks of Pattar,[25] Aṭiyār,[26] Aṭiyavar,[27] Toṇṭar[28] Pakavar,[29] Kēcavaṉ-tamar,[30] Nāraṇaṉ-tamar,[31] Mātavaṉ-tamar,[32] Āḷiyāṉ-tamar,[33] Vaikuṇthaṉ-tamar,[34] and Vaiṭṇavar[35] in his *Tiruvāymoḷi*. 'Kēcavaṉ-tamar' literally means relatives of Kēcavaṉ or the Lord signifying His devotees; similarly the meanings of others (*tamar*–relatives). The word '*vaiṭṇavar*' signifies a band of people who have embraced Vaiṣṇavism. But, Nañcīyar, one of the Vaiṣṇavite *ācāryas*, gives the definition of Vaiṣṇavite like this: "Any one can test himself as a true Vaiṣṇavite or not. If, when seeing others' adversity, his pity be excited, and he does ejaculate 'oh!' he may know himself as a true Vaiṣṇavite; but if his heart be steeled against others' tribulation and further vitiated by emotions of vile pleasure surging up at his sight, he

25. T.V.M 1.5: 11; 6.4: 11.
26. ibid. 5.2: 9; 5.6: 1; 7.4: 11; 10.5: 11; 10.9: 7, 8, 11.
27. ibid. 3.5. 11: 3.7: 7, 9, 10.
28. ibid. 3.7: 4; 3.7: 11; 5.2: 10; 6.9: 11; 10.8: 11.
29. ibid. 5.2: 9.
30. ibid. 2.6: 11; 2.7: 1.
31. ibid. 10.9: 1,2.
32. ibid. 10.9: 5.
33. ibid. 10:9: 6.
34. ibid. 10.9: 9.
35. ibid. 5.5: 11; cf. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.1: 3.

may know himself as not belonging to such a holy band. To be a Vaiṣṇavite is to belong to God, and *vice-versa.* To belong to God is to be like God Himself, i.e., conform to the ideals which he has preached and practised, one of these ideals being to be "the Friends of all Creatures".[36] It appears that both these words relate to one and the same meaning. Again the words *'pāttar'*; *'aṭiyār'* (*aṭiyavar*), *'toṇṭar'* and *'pakavar'* signify only devotees of Viṣṇu; they may be taken for granted emphasizing respectively: *Bhakti*-reverential love, *Aṭimai*-abosolute self-surrender, and *Toṇṭu*-service. "*Pakavar*" signifies a kind of devotees who carry *'mukkōl,* or *'tiri-daṇḍa'* with them. The *Tolkāppiyam* refers to them as *'antaṇar'*[37] who are ascetics. The same work refers to *'pārppār'* (brahmins),[38] *'aṟivar'*[39] (sages or wise men), and *'tāpatar'*.[40] It is certain that these words do not refer to the same class of people or each word does not refer to different types of people. *Pārppār* are different from *aṟivar* and *antaṇar.* The latter refer to ascetics, who have controlled their senses and the mind, always thinking of God, and who can predict the past, present and future incidents. *Tāpatar* are those who are *tapasvins* and who are ready to attain the state of *aṟivar. Pārppār* are brahmins who have only taken up the study of *Vedas,* but who have not attained the state of *aṟivar* or *antaṇar.* There are references in *Kalit-tokai*[41] to *antaṇar.* The *tiri-daṇḍa* can be taken to signify *Īśvara, cit acit* and the relationship between which explain the principles of Viśiṣṭādvaitic Vaiṣṇavism. References to *'mukkōl'* (*tiri-daṇḍa*) are found in the *Pattup-pāṭṭu*[42] and the *Kalit-tokai.*[43] Naccinārkkiṉiyar, the well-known commentator, gives the meaning of the phrase, *'mukkōl koḷ antaṇar'* occuring in the work as 'saf-

---

36. *Īṭṭin Tamiḻākkam* Vol. I, 1.2: 1.
37. T.L.K. 3: Śūtras, 615, 616.
38. ibid. - Śūtras: 74, 175.
39. ibid. Śūtras; 74, 152.
40. ibid. Śūtra, 74.
41. K.L.T. 9, 119.
42. *Mullap-pāṭṭu* - l. 38.
43. K.L.T. 126, l. 4.

fron colour dressed groups of people' thereby meaning ascetics[44] The later work *Tañcaivāṇaṉ kōvai* speaks of '*mukkōṟ-pakavar*'.[44] It is these ascetics who are referred to as *pakavar* in the ancient Tamil literature. The later works such as *Kōvai* literature refer to them as '*mukkōṟ-pakavar*' and '*mikkōr*'. It is said that a knowledge of philosophy and love of God are the two basic necessities for any kind of religious faith. It is also assumed that the former does intensify the latter. But it is well-known that these two are not found to exist in persons in equal measure. Some are more philosophical-minded and others more religious-minded. But the inclination of both is towards renunciation, Those whose inclination is more towards philosophy are known as '*pakavar*' and those householders whose inclination is towards *bhakti* as '*aṭiyār*'. Periyāḻvār not only refers to these types of devotees, but also sages who recite the *Vedas*: "Pattarkaḷum pakavarkaḷum paḻamoḻivāy muṉivarkaḷum"[45] – the *bhaktas, pakavars* and sages who mouth *Vedas*'. Nammāḻvār refers to both these saints in his *Tiruvāymoḻi*. Says the Āḻvār: "The world is full of *aṭiyārs* and *pakavars* who render service to God by strictly adhering to the principles of *bhakti-mārga* and by uttering the *Puruṣa-sūktas*, *Nārāyaṇuvāka* etc.; so go to them, reventially worship them and attain salvation".[46] This advice of the Āḻvār, according to the commentators, relates to those who render service to the Lord as for example to Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma referred to here as *aṭiyārs* and to those who meditate the Lord and his manifold auspicious qualities as for instance Bharata to Rāma Āḷavantār interprets '*toḻutal* (worship) as the worship of the devotees of God; but Rāmānuja interprets it as the worship of God. Even though all the words denote the *bhāgavatas* in general, some distinction can be seen through from the suggestive meanings of *toṇṭar*, *aṉpar* and *paṭṭar*. The word '*aṉpar*' can be taken as emphasizing, '*toṇṭar*' the bodily activity and '*pattar*' the speach aspect. *Aṭiyārs* are the life of the *Bhakti* cult. It is from this point of view that Vaiṣṇavism becomes a religion of service.

---

44. *Tañcaivāṇaṉ kōvai*, 341.
45. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.9: 6.
46. T.V.M. 5.2: 9. cf. 4.4: 9.

In regard to the Supreme Ruler of all, the *jīva* who is the *śeṣa* is bound to promote His glory. That glory will depend on the nature of the *śeṣa*, whether it be sentient or non-sentient. The *jīva*, with his body and the like, can confer only such glory as non-sentient things do. So this service is common to him and *acit*. The special glory that he can promote must be by means of his intelligence. "Bhagavān, Who has all beings as His body, rejoices when a *jīva* does what is good and does not rejoice when the action is evil"[47] when a man acts in accordance with the *Sāstras*, he gives thereby delight to the Lord and thus does not let his generosity and other qualities run to waste, but promotes the glory of the Lord so that He extols him as "All these are indeed, generous."[48] Again they are the devotees whose devotion is single-minded and whose highest goal is only the Lord. They live in the Divine. God is dear to them and they are dear to God. These devotees belong to God to be used according to His will. These can give rise to a special kind of enjoyment to the Lord and thus promote His glory in the same way as the *muktas* and the *nityas* do so by direct perception of the Lord's will and by acting in such a way as to give Him enjoyment. "When shall I always be Thy servant, look upon Thee as my Master and in this way give Thee delight?[49] says Āḷavantār.

In Vaiṣṇavism the cult of the *bhāgavata* worship of the *aṭiyārs* or devotees - is considered greater than the worship of the Lord Himself. The *sāstras* disclose that the service rendered to His devotees is most delightful to Him. The following authoritative statements bear testimony to this: "Of all forms of homage, the homage paid to Viṣṇu is the best, but superior even to this, is the excellent homage or adoration to Viṣṇu's devotees".[50] "I have great affection to those who are devoted to my devotees. Therefore one should render

---

47 M.Bh. Śānti. 199 : 25.

48. Bh. G. 7: 18.

49. *Śtotrāratnam*, 46.

50. *Padmottaram*, 29: 81.

devout service to them".[51] "They are my devotees who do not show devotion to any other deity, who love those that are devoted to me and that have sought me as their *upāya*".[52] From these statements it becomes clear that, of all forms of service which a *śeṣa* of the Lord may render, that rendered to the *bhāgavatas* is the most important and is the most pleasing to the Lord, in the same way as the fondling of the prince is most pleasing to the king. Again, according to *pramāṇas*, Īśvara, who has the *bhāgavata* as His body is the object of worship. As the devotees are His very self,[53] He would be pleased at the service rendered to *bhāgavata*, as if it were service rendered (directly) to His own inner self and not as that done to His body. Nammālvār speaks of service rendered to the *bhāgavatas* as the supreme goal of life. In referring to the result flowing from the recitation of his hymns the Āḷvār says: "The Lord and His Spouse will possess them and they will get the benefit of rendering service to the devotees of Viṣṇu,"[54] and "they would live amidst wife and children a full life and yet to be dedicated to the service of the devotees of the Lord."[55] In this connection, a beautiful anecdote is referred to by the commentators[56]

Again, those who look upon themselves as *śeṣas* to His devotees are, mediately through these devotees, *śeṣas* to the Lord Himself. Tirup-pāṇāḷvār says: 'The Lord Who is spotless and Who has made me the servant of His servants'–

---

51. M.Bh. Aśvamedika, 116 : 23.
52. ibid. 104 : 91.
53. Bh. G. 7 : 18.
54. TVM 5.6 : 11.
55. ibid. 8. 10 : 11.
56. Once Rāmānuja returned to Tirukkōṭṭiyūr along with a great band of *bhāgavatas* and entered into the mansion of Celva Nampi who was then not in station. There was no rice in the house then except some hundred bundles of paddy-seeds reserved for sowing in the season. Nampi's wife hulled that paddy and fed the devotees. On the following lay Nampi returned and when he enquired his wife about the absence of paddy-seeds, quickly came the reply "I have sown them in the Paramapada". (Vide: *Iṭṭin Tamiḷ-ākkam* Vol. VIII 8. 10 : 11 (Commentary).

"aṭiyāṟkku eṉṉai āṭpaṭutta vimalaṉ."[57] So does Nārada say: "I, Nārada, have come here with an eager longing to see you. To men like me, O Brahmin, those who are *bhaktas* of the Lord are masters."[58] In this connection Periyāḷvār's statement is very significant. "Those who are the servants of *bhāgavatas* – (devotees of devotees) – who utter such names as Kēcava, Puruṭōttama etc., of Bhagavāṉ are entitled even to sell us."[59] This is also the purport of the middle word in *Tirumantiram*, namely, *namo*: *na mama* (not for me). A reflection on this purport will clearly show that our being *śeṣa* to the Lord is both mediate (through the *bhāgavatas* and immediate (direct to Him). Accordingly the service that should be rendered by the *śeṣa* is also (both) mediate and direct. Therefore it is the farthest limit of our service to perform, as much as it lies in our power, service to the *bhāgavata*, since it is part of the duty of one who is *śeṣa* to Bhagavāṉ So this outer-most region of service to *bhāgavatas* should be kept properly cultivated so that it may not become fallow land full of weeds.

The *Āgamas* also support the service to the *bhāgavatas*. "It is not wrong for a wedded wife to honour her husband and to honour his servants, whether in his presence, or absence"[60] and "Among the Lord's retinue are two classes: those that are dear to Him and worthy of His trust and those who are not. To the former class belong the Eternals, the released souls and the *bhāgavatas*. To the latter class belong Brahmā and other gods who are subject to the sway of past *karma*. The seeker after salvation should not adore the latter;"[61] the devotee who is exclusively attached to the Lord and whose *dharma* resembles that of a chaste wife would therefore do well to act according to the will of his Lord. Since the relationship of *śeṣa* to *bhāgavatas* arises

---

57. A.P. 1.
58. *Padmottaram*, 81: 52.
59. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 10.
60. Pous. Sam. cited in R.T.S. Ch. 16.
61. ibid. cited ibid.

from no other cause than the knowledge of our being *śeṣa* only to the Lord and to no other, this service to the *bhāgavatas* is not improper, because it does not arise from other causes like the desire for wealth or power.

Maturakaviyāḷvār can be cited as the best instance of a devotee of Lord's devotee as he says, "Naṇṇit teṉ kurukūr nampi eṉṟakkāl, aṇṇikkum amutu ūṟum eṉ nāvukkē" - 'In clinging to Nammāḷvār, if I utter his name it is highly sweet; even nectar secretes in my tongue' and "Tēvu maṟṟaṟiyēṉ" - 'I do not know any other God except my own *guru*, Nammāḷvār.' Saivism refers to these type of saints as '*Pattarāyp-paṇivār*' (devotees of devotees). '*Paṇital*' emphasizes here bending low in humility and service. Like Maturakaviyāḷvār in Vaiṣṇavism were saints in the Saivism also who worshipped the three great *Tēvāram* saints with reverence and admiration. Kaṇanātar worshipped Campantar; Appūtiyaṭikaḷ worshipped Appar; and Perumiḻalaikkuṟumpar worshipped Nampi Ārūrar. Irrespective of the greatness of Saivite *aṭiyārs* it was thought that one should offer one's service to the *aṭiyārs* in general looking upon them as no other than the Lord Siva himself. In the biography of certain saints like Ēṉātinātar, Meyp-poruḷ Nāyaṉar, Pukaḻccōḻa Nāyaṉar and Kaḷaṟiṟṟaṟivār the reverence for the outward form is clearly brought out and they were prepared to offer their all and sacrifice their dearest and nearest as well as their own lives. This is termed as *Cariya-mārga* in Saivism. According to Va ṣṇavism, following the path of the Lord is *Sāra Dharma* the good; surrender to Him is *Sārataha Dharma*, the better; surrender to His devotees is *Sāratama Dharama*, the best. Therefore it is said that God would forgive an offence to Himself, but an offence to His devotees – *aṭyārs* – was unpardonable. *Bhāgavata-apacāra* is more heinous than *Bhagavat - apacāra.*

Though it is said, in general, that one should serve the devotees of God, and the devotees of God are treated as deities, yet the best relation that could be said to crown the devotion for a devotee is that of an individual's treating the devotee as his spiritual preceptor. Maturakaviyāḷvār stands

at the head of the best of disciples who propitiated the devotee. God is available for man to get from Him enjoyment of bliss, *mokṣa* and detachment. The Lord Himself comes to rescue the devotee from sins. He teaches the nature of Reality to him and gives him His nature and descends down for the sake of those who are devoted to Him. Yet Maturakaviyāḷvār sought the feet of Nammāḷvār who rendered into Tamil the difficult imports of the *Vedas*[62].

The idea of reverential feeling towards the devotees is nothing new. Periyāḷvār talks of these devotees as a separate community - "*toṇṭakkulam*"[63] (a clan of divine servants or devotees) thereby abolishing the feeling of all castes, and creating a spiritual community of all those who worship the Lord to whatever caste or creed they may belong.[64] The love for God reaches its highest point only when it becomes the love of the *bhāgavatas* or *toṇṭars*, even to the neglect of God. The phrase '*toṇṭaraṭip-pōṭi*' referred to by Kulacēkarāḷvār is very significant; the dust on the feet of the devotees is purer than the waters of the sacred Gaṅga according to the conviction of the Āḷvār. "Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi āṭa nām peṛil, kaṅkai nīr kuṭaintu āṭum vēṭkai eṉ āvatē?"[65] is the statement of the Āḷvar. In fact the whole hymn speaks out the Āḷvār's regard and respect for the devotees of the Lord. There is no greater profit or pleasure for the eyes than to look at a gathering of the true devotees of Lord Raṅganātha who dance in ecstasy out of feelings of love towards the 'Dark Gem' that resides at Śrī Raṅgam. In Saivism Cuntaramūrtti creates a democracy of devotees, a demacracy of all times and climes. In his well-known hyman of *Tēvāram*, better known as *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*, he enumerates with joy the names of all these saints.[66] It is a beautiful vision of all such *āṭiyārs* of the past, the present and the future belonging to the whole of the universe, a vision

---

62. *Gurnparamparā-sāra* Introductory verse. 2.
63. Periyaḷ. Tm. 1.1: 5.
64. M.Bh. Śānti. 108 : 32.
65, *Perum. Tm.* 2 : 2.
66. *Tevāram* 7.39.

of a spiritual democracy of love and service. In the hymns of Āḻvārs there occur some requests to the birds to carry the message of love-sick maiden to the Lord. The Vaiṣṇavite commentators have always interpreted these birds as the *bhaktas*, as spiritual guides carrying the message to the Lord.[67] The four hymns of *Tiruvāymoḻi*[68] on sending of messages through birds have to be interpreted in this manner. Many of the Āḻvārs take a pride in calling themselves as *Toṇṭarkaḷ*,[69] *Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi*,[70], *Aṭiyān*,[71] *Toṇṭan Caṭakōpan*,[72] *Toṇṭanēn*.[73]

It was a common belief in the age of Āḻvārs that for a full-blown devotee to be born, his previous seven generations should have been pure and should have been worshipping the Lord. Periyāḻvār refers to this as, "Entai tantai tantai tantai tam mūttappan ēḻpaṭikāl toṭaṅki, vantu vaḻivaḻi āṭceykinṟōm"[74] – 'My father, his father, his father, his father, his grand father and like this we have been serving the Lord for the last seven generations.' The same belief is referred to by Nammāḻvār also. "We are the devotees of those people who have been worshipping the Lord Who is sleeping on the banyan leaf in the Milky Ocean as a small child after having taken the world trodden by His sacred Feet at the time of Tirivikramāvatāra in His stomach in their seven generations,"[75] says the Āḻvār. The Āḻvār considers those devotees of devotees as his masters provided they become the devotees of the *cāṇṭāḷas* of *cāṇṭāḷas* who are far beyond the lowest rungs of the four castes when these *cāṇṭāḷas* are the devotees of blue-coloured Lord with discus in His right hand.[76] Again, he says that the

67. Vide: A.H. Sūtras. 150-156.
68. T.V.M. 1.4; 6.1; 6.8; 9.7.
69. *Periyāḻ Tm.* 1.1 : 8.
70. T.M. 45.
71. T.E. 10.
72. T.V.M. 6.9 : 11; 7.1 : 11; 8.9 : 11.
73. ibid. 8.5 . 6.
74. *Periyāḻ Tm* 1.1: 6.
75. T.V.M. 3.7: 10; cf. ibid. 3.7: 1.
76. ibid. 3.7: 9.

people who are undergoing the most difficult punishment in the hell are worthy of His worship in His manifold births provided they worship the Lord Who is the creator of the world Whose greatness cannot be comprehended even by the celestials and in Whose bosom Lakṣmī has taken Her abode.[77] In another place he refers to God as "Empirāṉai entai tantai tantaikkum tampirāṉai"[78] – 'God not only as his helper, but also the Lord and master of his father and his father .... (meaning all his forefathers).' It may be noted the same belief being expressed in the Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's hymns also. "Oh the Lord of Tiruvintaḷūr! Thou art hesitating to show Thy physical presence to me who belong to a family in which the past seven generations are continuously rendering devoted service to Thee,"[79] says the Āḷvār.

The compositions of the Āḷvārs furnish much information on the greatness of the devotees. If people think simply that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are only the Lord descended on earth, they would be the Lord's men (*bhāgavatās*) and the gods would be pleased at this and they will ever have their palms folded to respect them.[80] Nammāḷvār waxes eloquent while speaking the greatness of the devotees. The *bhaktas* sing the praise of the Lord and move about the earth with the result that the hells and the sins have been destroyed on earth and the lord of Death has no work to do nor has the *kali* age anything to do.[81] This shows that the names of the Lord as also His praises, when uttered, purify not merely those who express or sing them but also those who listen to them. This does not stop there. The entire regions which are traversed by such devotees become purified, leaving no room for any evil force.[82] On account of this, the *kali* age become *kṛta* age.[83] Diseases, hatred, hunger and other evil forces have

77. ibid. 3.7: 8.
78. ibid. 1.10: 3.
79. Peri. Tm. 4.9: 9.
80. P.Tv. 64.
81. T.V.M. 5.2: 1, 2; cf. ibid. 5.2: 4.
82. V.Dh. Ch. 90; cf. T.M. 12.
83. T.V.M. 5.2: 3.

become destroyed.[84] The *bhāgavatas* are the bodies of the Lord and as such they could be worshipped.[85] This decad 5.2 of *Tiruvāymoḷi* asks people to worship the devotees of God. The worship of such great souls is held to be greater significance than that of God Himself.[86] Affection for the devotees of God, rejoicing when God is worshipped by them, eagerness to listen to the narrations about Him, affection of the tone, eye and limbs while others worship the Lord, making one's own attempt to worship Him, straight forwardness (absence of hypocricy) in dealing with the Lord, constant thinking of Him and dependence upon Him not for the ends other than *mokṣa* are stated to be the eightfold devotion. Even the misbehaved (*mlēccha*), who has these, is the best among the brahmins, is a meditator, is prosperous, is a recluse and scholar. One shall give gifts to him and shall receive gifts from him. He is to be worshipped like God Himself'.[87]

An ardent devotee shall aspire to long for the companionship of the *bhāgavatas*. The Āḷvār likes to have the company of the devotees of the Lord even in the state of release.[88] He is anxiously yearning to get the opportunity of rendering service to them.[89] Those fortunate persons who reflect upon the greatness of the sacred places like Tirukkaṭalmallai are to be treated as lords,[90] nay they are the deities.[91] They are to be worshipped[92] and circumambulated.[93] The *bhāgavatas* who bow at the Feet of the Lord at Tiruccēṟai deserve to sit upon other's heads, that is, they

---

84. ibid. 5.2: 6.
85. ibid. 5.2: 7.
86. *Padmottaram* 29: 81.
87. Gar. P 219.6: 9.
88. T.V.M. 2.3: 10.
89. T.V.C. 3.
90. Peri. Tm. 2.6: 2, 3.
91. ibid. 2.6: 4.
92. ibid. 2.6: 7, 8, 9.
93. ibid. 2.6: 6.

are fit to be bowed by others.[94] Such persons dwell for ever in the heart of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār.[95] This Āḷvār states emphatically that he would not leave the company of those great men[96] who could be taken to be superior even to the eternal selves.[97] His heart feels the delectable experience when it thinks of them.[98] His senses derive supreme satisfaction as they set on them.[99] Neither the god of Death nor sins would dare approach those who worship these *bhāgavatas*.[100] The Āḷvār speaks with full of feeling that in worldly experience which is felt to be excruciating, he is singularly fortunate in that his mind is set on the devout persons who worship the Feet of Śrī Sārānatha at Tiruccēṛai.[101] Again it has been stated in the *Śāstras* the choice of a proper residence for a devotee. A devotee shall choose to live in a place where the *bhāgavatas* dwell.[102] The people, who live in Tirukkōṭṭiyūr must have practised austerities for living there where live the devotees of God.[103] That place shall be chosen where the devotees of God are honoured.[104]

According to Vaiṣṇavism, offence against God's devotees (*bhāgavnta apacāra*) is the worst of all sins. God will neither brook nor excuse who offend His devotees. It is to punish the offender of the devotees that God took birth again and again in this world. This is also the secret (*rahasya*) of His *avatāra* (divine descent).[105] One of the several kinds offence against God's devotees distinction of caste shown between one *bhāgavata* and another is worst. This is even more

---

94. ibid. 7.4: 1.
95. ibid. 7.4: 2.
96. ibid 7.4: 4.
97. ibid. 7.4: 3.
98 ibid. 7.4: 5.
99. ibid. 7.4: 6, 7.
100. ibid. 7.4: 8.
101. ibid. 7.4: 9.
102. cf. R.T.S.: *Sthānaviseṣādhikāra* (Chap. 19).
103. Periyāḷ. T.m. 4.4: 7.
104. M.Bh. Śānti. 349: 86 to 88.
105. S.V.P. Chap; 2. Sūt. 78.

heinous than examining the material of which God's image is made in the temple. This has been pronounced in the *Śāstras* as equivalent to a man's examining the womb of his own mother.[106] The punishment for offending the feelings of God's devotees are, as it is seen in the ancient scripts, very severe and, strictly speaking, severer than offending God Himself. To cite a few examples, Tiricaṅku, a kṣatriya, became an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*) in one night by offending sage Vaśiṣta; when Prahlāda, a devotee of Nārāyaṇa, was threatened by his father Hiraṇya, the Lord appeared as Narasimha and killed the offender of His devotee;[107] Garuḍa lost his wings by wounding the feelings of Cāṇḍilyai (a female devotee) residing in *Riṣaba* Hills. Garuḍa's crime was that he considered the residence of Cāṇḍilyai not as a holy Hill but as an ordinary mountain.[108] Soma Sarma, a brahmin possessed by a *brahma rākṣasa*, got himself free from it by the blessings of Nampāṭuvāṉ, an outcaste devotee.[109] From these examples it is learnt that there is no question of superiority of birth in a devotee.

Brahmin birth is intended to be useful for the study of the *Vedas* and thereby attaining God. But if that study conduces to *bhāgavata apacāra*, the study becomes useless and his birth has no value. God, according to Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār, has instructed those (brahmins) who follow the traditional knowledge of the four *Vedas* to respect His devotees even though they belong to the lowest caste and give the highest truth to them and take the same from them.[110] If they, though born of brahmin caste and learnt the *Vedas* and their *aṅgas*, speak disrespectfully of His devotees and their castes, the very instant they would become outcastes.[111] The Āḷvār goes to the extent of saying that those who accept the remnants of food from the devotees of the Lord,

---

106. ibid. Chap. 2. Sūt. 83.
107. Peri. Tm. 2.3: 8; 3.1 : 4.
108. M.Bh. Udyoga Ch. 112.
109. *Kaiśika Vṛttānta.*
110. T.M. 42. cf. ibid. 39.
111. ibid. 43.

devotees in the sense that they have simply praised Him as the One Whom the celestials cannot see and as the One Who has worn the fresh *tuḷaci* garland, though the latter have committed baser acts and have abetted others to commit these acts.[112] By these, it is seen that one's high or low birth is not the primary cause for attaining salvation, but the true cause is his relationship with God. In attaining *mokṣa,* the brahmin is necessarily at a disadvantageous position if he is proud on account of his high birth. Secondly, by virtue of his birth, he is obliged to observe other means of salvation, namely, *bhakti-yoga* which is a steep path hedged in by the exacting conditions of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* including the wearisome disciplines of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and the *sātvic* patience to endure the ills of *prārabdha–karma* till it is exhausted or expiated which are against the true nature of the soul. So long as a brahmin has got these two faults in him, it is ever difficult for him to attain salvation. Those in the other castes too have the same disability varying in greater or less degree[113] The *caṇḍāla* of the lowest rank has no such predicament; he is totally free from the superiority complex of birth which is a great impediment to salvation. So every one must cultivate the virtues of humility and recognise the utter uselessness of seeking other means of salvation.

On the other hand one must regard these low born devotees as equal to *ācārya,* and superior to *samsāris* (worldlings), to himself and even to God. These truths are shown in *Itihāsas, Purāṇas,* and Āḷvārs' hymns. It is generally believed that for the good done in this generation we reap the fruits in the next. So it may be argued that these *bhāgavatas* of the low caste can become sages only in the next. It is also argued that conversion will not be visible in the one and the same life. But it is not so in the case of *bhāgavatas.* The moment the *caṇḍāla* becomes a devotee, he becomes spiritually reborn and entitled to all respect. Nammāḷvār's reference to *caṇḍāḷa* as mentioned above can be an instance in point.

---

112. ibid. 41.

113. Iti. Sam. 30: 100.

There are other illustrations also. While Viśvāmitra, a *kṣatriya*, can become a *Brahma-ṛṣi* in the same generation, it is not strange or impossible that a devotee of God can become purified in the same generation. Śrī Rāma performed *Brahma-mēdha* (rites due to a Brahmin) to Jaṭāyu, a mere bird, because the latter had by devotion attained that merit. Dharmaputra performed similar rite to Vidhura though the latter was a *sudra*. Several *ṛṣis* waited at the gate of Dharmavyādha (the butcher devotee) to clear their doubts in the *Vedas*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, passing through the dwellings of learned Bhīṣma, the high born Droṇa, and of King Duryodhana, delighted in dining in the house of the blessed Vidhura, as he offered the food with all humility and God's own unlike the offerings of others which were tainted with *ahaṅkāra*. Again Śrī Rāma graciously accepted with love the half-bitten fruit from Sabhari, a hunter devotee. Periya Nampi, one of the spiritual masters of Rāmānuja performed *Brahma-mēdha* according to the highest Brahmin rites, to Māṟa-Nēr Nampi (equivalent to Parāṇkuśa himself), a Harijan saint, a disciple of Āḷavantār. Therefore in the philosophy of *aṭiyārs* one attains one's greatness only by one's *bhakti*, not by one's birth. In the words of Piḷḷaipperumāḷ Ayyeṅgār[114] only those who transcend the barriers of consciousness of birth, caste and other factors are entitled to be included in the fold of *toṇṭakkulam*[115] - universal brotherhood - the vision of Periyāḷvār. Therefore one has to please the *bhāgavatas* in order to win the Grace of the Lord. This is a condition that is necessarily to be fulfilled.[116] Such persons would be relieved of their sins.[117] People meet with downfall by bending before those who are not the devotees of Viṣṇu, by insulting Kēcava and scandalizing the devotees of the Lord. Those who are unfavourably disposed to the devotees of the Lord are farther away from the Lord.[118]

---

114. *Tiruvaraṅkak-kalampakam*, 15.
115. *Periyāḷ. Tm.* 1.1: 5.
116. Iti. Sam. 27: 26.
117. M.Bh Āśramavāsika, 96: 46.
118. V.Dh. 99: 13.

Even Garuḍa, the Lord's servant, friend, vechicle, seat and emblem on the banner, who committed an offence agninst the righteous Sāṇḍiliyai had to undergo the evil consequences of it until he obtained pardon from her. It may be asked whether an Eternal like Garuḍa could commit offences at all. The answer is that, if the Eternals incarnate like Bhagavāṉ, they have to act the part of those who are subject to the sway of *karma* and perform atonement for offences in order to promote the good of the world by setting a proper example Of these sins which have to be atoned for, Śrī Rāmānuja has pointed out that offences done to the *bhāgavatas* stand in the front rank like those done to the wives of a king."[119] Rāmānuja says that though the fruit of *upāsana* or *bhakti* is *mukti* still the time of its attainment is uncertain, becnuse of the presence or absence of obstacles. It may be asked whether there could be any such obstacle in the case of one whose *upāsana* which gets him *mukti* is far stronger than all other *karmas*. The answer is, according to Bhāṣyakāra, that even in his case there may be obstacles of the nature of offences done in the past to those who meditate on Brahman.

It is true that particular actions and absention from such actions have been prescribed in the case of *bhāgavatas* as due to conditions of caste and the like as stated in the *Vedānta Sūtra*: "That there is permission and prohibition in respect of castes is due to their relationship with their bodies as in such things as fire."[120] In spite of these ordinances the following also should be considered. "Even a man of bad conduct should be considered a good man if he worships Me without expecting any other benefit. He should be treated with respect."[121] "The *caṇḍāḷa* who has devotion to Bhagavān – to think even by mere chance, of this *caṇḍaḷa* to talk to him and to treat him with respect – these purify the man who does so, O Brahmin."[122] "Whether the devotee of Bhagavāṉ be a

119. V.S. 3.4: 51 (Rāmānuja's commentary)
120. V.S. 2.3: 47.
121. Bh. G. 9: 40.
122. Iti. Sam. 31: 55.

sudra, a huntsman, or a man who eats a dog's flesh, the man who looks upon him as identical with other men of those respective castes will go to hell."[123] "Therefore one should do what one can to please the devotees of Bhagavān. By this, Bhagavān becomes favourably disposed to bless one. There is no doubt about this."[124] So also has it been said by Nammāḷvār that those who are the devoted servants of the Lord even if they are born of the lowest rung of the castes and *caṇḍālas* of *caṇḍālas* are his masters in all his future births;"[125] and that the moment he made up his mind to render service to the Lord's devotees, his past *karma* was destroyed and that he would never think of giving up his service.[126] In the same way, it is our duty not to fail in reverence toward's Lord's servants. Even if there is only this mental reverence, it would amount to *śeṣa's* service to the Lord Who is perfect and self-sufficient. The thought that "this man is of the Lord" is itself capable of doing good. If there is any deviation from this path, one should tremble in fear as if one has entered into the jaws of Death. In such a case, one should at once beg pardon of these devoted servants of the Lord, as in the case of Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa who apologise to each other."[127]

Whether a man has offended *bhāgavatas* in this life or whether some *bhāgavatas* hate him owing to his wicked deeds in past lives though he has committed no offence in this life, he should obtain the pardon of Bhagavān by obtaining the pardon of such *bhāgavatas* by some means or other. If a man does not do so, he will pass beyond the reach of the Grace of the Lord and will lose also what is essential to his nature as a devotee to Viṣṇu, namely, his being a *śeṣa* to Bhagavān and, likewise, his qualities of self-restraint and patience. For it has been said: "Those who are *bhāgavatas*, they are Myself. There is no doubt about this; when they are adored, I am adored; when they are pleased, I am also

123. ibid. 27: 26.
124. ibid. 27: 27.
125. T.V.M. 3.7: 9; cf. Peri. Tṁ. 2 6: 2 to 10.
126. ibid. 8.10.
127. Rām. Kiṣkinda 32: 7; 36: 11; 36: 28.

pleased. He who hates them hates Me also."[128] Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār who realised and enjoyed his relationship of being a śeṣa to the *bhāgavatas*, which he considered as his distinctive feature, has described how miserable it is to be outside the pale of Lord's Grace as follows: "My Lord has not said 'This is a lad deserving of my affection.' How wicked are my sins!"[129] The Āḷvārs in general are always conscious of not committing offences to the devotees of Bhagavān, as in the following passages: 'We will never do what ought not to be done. We will never go to any *ācārya* and study heretical *Śāstras*' – "ceyyātana ceyyōm, tīkkuṟaḷai ceṉṟu ōtōm,"[130] and 'Vouchsafe Thy Grace so that I may not do wicked deeds' - "ceyyēṉ tīviṉai eṉṟu aruḷ ceyyum."[131] If we consider the statement of Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār viz., "O Lord of the world! Consider my offences as virtuous acts," it also means the prayer that offences should be pardoned. Therefore, if a devotee happens to commit an offence, he is bound to obtain pardon. "Whether offences are committed deliberately or out of ignorance, the only expiation that is required is to say 'Pardon me'."[132] Periyāḷvār says: "My servants will not commit offences. Even if they ecommit them, I will consider them as if they were virtuous."[133] Even this verse indicates that offences are not unlikely The sentence "If they commit offences, I will consider them as virtuous actions" means "If done out of ignorance, I will pardon them If offences are committed deliberately and if they do not obtain pardon, I will condone them after inflicting punishment, but will never forsake them" That, as a matter of fact, these offences are not virtuous acts as is indicated therein when it is said: "It will be considered *as if* they were good deeds." It is distinctly stated: "If there is an offence, expiation should be done at once. The expiation that is to be done is to perform *prapatti* again."[134]

128. V.Dh. 52: 20.
129. T.M. 37.
130. T.P. 2.
131. T.V M. 2.9: 3.
132. Vaṅkipuram Nampi: Kārika. 520.
133. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.9: 2.
134. L.T. 17: 91, 92.

The celebration of festivals and observance of sacred days play an appreciable role in the cult of the *bhāgavatas*. The sanctity of certain moments and periods of time by association with memorable events, holy persons, and notable psychic experiences is the basic idea underlying the observance of sacred days and festivals. The one noteworthy feature of the Hindu attitude in this respect is the thoroghness with which the principle is worked out in the programme of devotions and pious exercises for every month and almost every day. All Hindu festivals are predominantly religious in character and significance. Though the origins of many of them are lost in the gloom of remote past, they all alike bear witness to the wide-spread popular faith and interest in the exercise of piety and devotion - in fasting, in vigils, in worship, in ablution, in offering to the manes, in gifts to holy persons, and in the practice of austerities and physical hardships as benefiting the spirit within. They also show as it were, how festivities lent joy and jest and variety to life's monotonous routine.

The observances of fasts and feasts are spread over all the months of the year, and are intended to serve as occasions for intensive contemplation of God. They are meant to be holidays from worldly life, especially the fasts giving opportunities to man to look within and search his heart. Many of these festivals are commemorations of great events recorded in the *Purāṇas*. The advent of *avatāras* like Narasimha, Rama and Kṛṣṇa, and the momentous events like the vanquishment of the demon Naraka by Viṣṇu are celebrated. One observes colourful scenes on such festive days in Indian cities and villages alike, because they are meant to be occasions for joys and thanks giving. Each one of these festivals commemorates the glory of God which puts down evil and enables good to prevail. Symbolically these feasts mean the overcoming of all that is base in us by the higher or real self.

A different group of festivals are the purificatory fasts. The followers of Vaiṣṇavite cult have their own special days in the year which they spend exclusively in prayer and worship. Many people on these occasions fast and keep vigil during the

night, read from the sacred texts and keep their minds engaged in thoughts on God. Birthdays *(Tiru-naksatrams)* of the Āḻvārs and those of great spiritual teachers like Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ are also celebrated in temples. During those occasions verses from the *Nālāyiram* are recited. Hinduism has always given the pride of place to the *ācāryas*. In the temples are honoured not only the idols of the Lord but also the images of the devotees. The true leaders of humanity are they who lift the veil of ignorance and let the lamp of God-knowledge shine. They are the real heroes who through spiritual valour and divine courage conquer the forces of evil and help their fellow-men to cross safely the ocean of *somsāra*. It is but fitting, therefore, that the dates of their advent should be commemorated every year.

The one purpose that runs through all the festivals is to create a spiritual climate for the people, a climate in which they could find their spiritual health and cultivate their soul. It is on these days, if properly observed, that one really lives. They are days of renewal of contact with God but for Whose presence no creature can live even for a moment. It is true that the ideal life is that which is spent without any break in the contemplation of God and in the service of all beings. To the truly wise all days are holy and sacred. But the people at large who have a long way to travel on the spiritual road need special days of prayer and religious rest. The festivals which are such days serve the same purpose in *time* as the temples do in *space*. Just as the temples are places which remind us of God, the festivals are times which make us commune with Him. Not only through worship and daily service of the images of the deities, but through the grand celebrations of their annual festivals, when the deities were taken out in procession, these temples created religious fervour among huge crowds of people drawn from far and near. The car-festival, specially, drew together the entire population of the locality. That such festivals in temples served as suitable occasions for religious discourses is also known from a reference in the Tamil work *Peruṅkatai*[135]

---

135. *Peruṅkatai.*

The compositions of the Āḷvārs refer to the occasions of festivals connected in temples. It is natural that the devotees of the Lord would throng in larger numbers on such occasions. Tirunaṟaiyūr[136] is said to have the streets ever putting on festival appearance. Those who are well-versed in the four *Vedas* are stated to join together and celebrate the festival for the Lord at Tirukkōṭṭiyūr and greet Him.[137] Tirukkaṇṇapuram is also a place of the Lord where the devotees of God have gathered in larger numbers in connection with festivals.[138] There are frequent references[139] to the celebration of the festival on the day having *'Tiruvōṇam'* as the constellation which has Viṣṇu as the presiding deity.

---

136. Peri. Tm. 6.4: 8; 6.7: 1.
137. Periyal. Tm. 4.4; 7.
138. Peri. Tm 8. 7: 2.
139. *Tiruppallāṇṭu*, 6, 9; Nāṉ. Tv. 41.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

It was Shelley who wrote "Die if thou wouldst be with that thou dost seek."[1] But the experiences and the teachings of the Āḻvārs are to the contrary. To the true lover of God Whose love is truly reciprocated, departure from this world and from this body is not essential for the realization of spiritual bliss. Encased in this material body and surrounded by this material world with all its temptations and allurements, he still finds it possible to realise the fulfilment of his soul and to reach the goal of his spiritual endeavour. In spite of his physical shortcomings and his material surroundings, he is able to centre his mind in God and convert this world of *samsāra*, in so far as he is concerned, into a world of eternal bliss. When that frame of his mind breaks into rhapsody, he sings in the following strain: "What is there wrong or low in my continuing in this life, if my beautiful lotus-eyed Lord so grant that my lips shall always utter His ever-increasing greatness and glory, my mind ever be filled by His rapturous and seductive Form, and my hands be unceasingly engaged in offering the choicest flowers at His divine Feet?"[2] Those who render service to Lord Kṛṣṇa are verily in the Paramapada and so need not aspire to reach that place.[3] Offering greetings to Him shall be practised assiduously not minding the worlds here and hereafter.[4] Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḻvār is fascinated by the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam. Therefore he emphatically rejects the offer of even Indra's post in heaven.[5] Vedānta Deśika, who could be said without

1 *The Complete Poetical works of Shelley.*
2. TVM 8.10: 4; cf. P. Tv. 48.
3. P. Tv 79.
4. ibid. 67.
5. T.M. 2.

any exaggeration, to have lived a peaceful life dedicating himself for the service of the Lord, enjoyed the supreme and ineffable charm of Lord Varadaraja at Kāñci and swore that he did not have any attraction for Vaikuṇṭha.[6] Devotees like these pious souls did not really choose to leave the world, but God chose them to be with Him in Vaikuṇṭha and so they had to leave their mortal frame.

It is true that the individual soul has not yet cast off its body which still ties it down to the material plane. But the centre of its existence has been shifted from itself to God. The Ptolemic theory has given place to the Copernican theory and it is now deeply realized and fully felt that our centre is outside us. When it was shown that the earth was not the centre about which the rest of the planets revolved, but was itself a microscopic speck revolving along one of several circumferences round another centre, then there came a revolution in the astronomical world. The shifting of the centre is so full of meaning and significance there. In a similar manner the individual soul is made to realize that the physical world, the animal world, the rest of mankind, the starry firmament above, and the warring elements below have not all been created for its pleasure and well-being, but that along with it viz., the individual soul, they are all revolving round one and the same centre, - God. And as concentric circles can never touch one another, clash or conflict cannot occur. Once this is understood in all its aspects and significance, there is no more trouble. The individual existence is no more in conflict with the cosmic existence. The motion of the planets round their own axis together with their moons and satellites is quite consistent with their motion round the sun. The individual beings have gravitated in like manner towards the Supreme Being and in that very gravitation, they find their source, sustenance and satisfaction.

This is the state that can be equated with the bliss of the Eternals. This is also the state referred to by Nammāḻvār

6. *Varadarājapañcaśat*, 49.

as one of the results flowing from the recitation of his hymns. Though they are born on earth as *samsāris* they will be superior to all others.[7] They will be enjoying the divine experience without interval of day or night and they will be blessed by God.[8] They will be blessed with the praises of the world and will lead a full life.[9] In short, theirs will be a "*Pukal vāḻkkai*" – 'a life of renown'. On attaining this earthly – unearthly state, the individual soul feels all the security and all the bliss that are usually understood to be the lot of the *mukta*, and thinks that this state itself is *mokṣa* and not merely a pale foretaste of it. It even feels in the first flush that this stage is higher and sweeter and more difficult of attainment than *mokṣa* itself. Many of the Āḻvārs claim for this state greater excellence than for the state of *mokṣa* in the eternal region of Paramapada.[10]

Intense experience of God fills the mystic devotee with delectable enjoyment relieving him of the stress and storm of worldly life. This experience lasts only for short periods which may vary from individual to individual. Occasions when such an experience is not had make the mystics yearn passionately for a reunion with the Divine. While this is expressed by some mystics, others become conscious of the worldly ills and plead to God for an escape from them. The actual impact of the sufferings of people, mystical and non-mystical, impress alike upon the mystics. The inevitable nature of the sufferings of the world is admitted by them. Ailments of mind and body, old age and requirements of daily life and the social adjustments with people of different abilities and capacities which are invariably unpalatable to the mystics together with the arousing of the impressions in themselves that have been imbedded in the beginningless series of previous births show the mystics that the world and life here, however much they are kept beyond the comprehension by the mystic experiences, have to be got rid

7. T.V.M. 5.9 : 11.
8. ibid. 8.5 : 11.
9. ibid. 3.3 : 11.
10. For example, vide P. Tv. 51, 79.

of once and for all. This shall be sought after, if sufferings, which had fallen to their lot, should be ended never to recur. God too teaches His men only this by withdrawing from time to time the intense experiences which are afforded by Him, in order that the real nature of mortality could be made known to them. Thus arises the need for final release or emancipation.

Mokṣa is the state of release of the soul from bondage due to *karma*. It is a return from the becoming of *samsāra* to the being of Brahman. It is thus a reversal of the empirical process due to the complex of *avidyā*, *kāma* and *karma* and the infinite regress of causality. In other words, it is liberation from worldly and other-worldly limitations and entry into the infinite. It thus implies self-transcendence in the subjective aspect of mastery over *karma* and in the objective aspect of going beyond the limits of space-time. Thus in a true emancipation the eternal transcends the temporal, and it is only in the world of Brahman transcending the phenomenal world that the self is transformed or brahmanized and enjoys eternal life. The *mukta* belongs to the realm of Brahman. Nammāḻvār in his vision of *mokṣa* views himself so far advanced in realization that he transcends the realm of the senses, apprehends the key differences between *ātman* and *prakṛti*, rises above the joys and sorrows, *puṇya* and *pāpa* of the world, and thereby experiences the release of the soul[11]. The verse under reference contains a full and apt description of the experience of *mokṣa* in and through the soul.

The state of final release is conceived differently by the different schools of thought and it is due to the concept of life that is idealised by the particular school. The schools like Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, Buddha and Jaina which stress on the worldly ills, declare the state of release as *nirvāṇa* (blowing out of everything that is distressing), *apavarga* (escaping from the material world), and *kaivalya* (existing in isolation). The Vaiśeṣika school, though closely allied to the Nyāya in its attitude to the world, mentions the state of release as supremely prosperous *(nihśreyasa)*, verily a state in which the self is free

11. T.V.M. 8.8: 6; cf. ibid. 1.2: 5.

from the material bonds and so lies in its own state. To the Advaitin, the state of *mokṣa* is an ideal one when the attribute-less Brahman alone exists. The same is the case with the schools of Bhedābheda and Suddhādvaita. All the other schools of Vedānta and the theistic schools of religion believe in the omni-presence of God. God comes down to this world and enables His devotees to have communion with Him. The love which the devotees have for God must perforce be wished to be everlasting. The awareness that mortality could not permit this naturally makes them wish to have the same experience in a life hereafter when no material binding can cut it at any stage. God Who condescends to grant His devotees such an experience here by presenting Himself unto them must and will grant an experience of the same kind to the maximum degree of delectability when the selves are not bound by any limitations. Naturally, the state of release is held by all these schools to be marked by supreme bliss without the least trace of suffering.

It is also said that *mukti* is the realization of the meaning of the relation between the self and the Universal Self enshrined in the *Upaniṣadic* text "Thou art That".[12] There is more value in abolishing the *ahaṅkāra* of the *jīva* by self-effacement and surrender of the self to the true Self. *Kaiṅkaryarasa* brings out the joy of selfless service. In attuning his naughted will to that of the *śeṣi*, the *mukta* feels that he is like a lute on which the supreme singer plays. Love is fulfilled in surrender and service; its cosmic value lies in attuning itself to the infinite. But it is the experience of the bliss of Brahman that expresses the supreme value of *mukti* in the Viśiṣṭādvaitic sense of the ecstasy of the unitive consciousness.[13] Then the *mukta* is immersed in the supreme and unsurpassable bliss of Brahmānubhava without losing his self-being. It is a state of *sāyujya* in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence.[14]

12. Ch. Up. 6.8 : 7.
13. Ve. Sūt. 4.4 : 21.
14. R.T.S. Ch. 22.

Nammāḻvār conceives *mokṣa* as the God's abode and also a place of the freed souls who are the real immortals. The Āḻvār refers to this place in his works as "*vīṭu*",[15] "*tuyar illā vīṭu*",[16] "*viṇ nāṭu*",[17] "*vāṉ nāṭu*",[18] "*vaikuṇṭham*",[19] "*Vaikuṇṭha vāṉ nāṭu*",[20] "*vaikuṇṭha-mānakar*"[21] and "*poṉ-ulaku*".[22] The reference to "*vaikuṇṭha nāṭan*"[23] or the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha signifies that God is the ruler of the city Vaikuṇṭha. *Vīṭu* is deliverance, deliverance from the worldly life or *samsāra.* The conception of *vīṭu* is not given by Tiruvaḷḷuvar in unequivocal terms; but the nearest approach can be seen in *Tirukkuṟaḷ.*[24] The same concept is clearly expressed by Nammāḻvār as "Aṟṟatu paṟṟeṉil uṟṟatu vīṭu uyir"[25] – the *jīva* (soul) once gives up its attachment to the worldly things attains *mokṣa.*' The words '*viṇṇāṭu*', '*vāṉ nāṭu*' suggest that the so-called place of *mokṣa* is situated far above the world in the endless space. The place it free from misery – "*tuyar illā vīṭu.*" The Āḻvār while stating the specific result flowing from a recitation of his hymns gives expression to *mokṣa.* Generally the ideal is always described in a positive way such as "those who recite this decad of ten verses will reach Vaikuṇṭha,[26] "those who sing these verses of the hymn will become the followers and lovers of the Lord",[27] "those who recite this decad will be freed from the cycle of births[28]"

---

15. T.V.R. 95; T.V.C. 2; P. Tv. 48; T.V.M. 1.1 : 10; 2.8 : 1, 10; 2.9 : 10; 2.9: 11; 3.4 : 11; 3.10: 11; 10.5 : 5; 10.10: 11.
16. ibid. 2.8 : 2.
17. T.V.R. 9, 54; P. Tv. 48, 79.
18. T.V.R. 23.
19. ibid 66, 68; P. Tv. 53; T.V.M. 2.1. 11; 2.5: 11; 4.7. 11; 4.8 : 11; 5.3: 11; 5.4: 11; 5.10: 11; 9.10: 5; 10.7: 8; 10.9: 9.
20. P, Tv. 68.
21. T.V M. 4.10 : 11.
22. ibid. 6.8 : 11.
23. ibid., 7.9 : 4.
24. *Kuṟaḷ* Ch. 35-37.
25. T.V.M. 1.2: 5.
26. T.V.M. 2.5 : 11; 4.8 : 11;
27. ibid. 2.6 : 11; 3.6 : 11; 5.5 : 11; 6.4 : 11; 6.9 : 11; 7.3 : 11.
28. ibid. 3.2: 11; 3.7: 11; 3.9 : 11; 8.3 : 11; 8.4 : 11.

"the recitors of the hymn of ten verses will be freed from *karma*",[29] "the decad on His sacred Feet will lead us to His Feet",[30] "this decad will purify and cleanse the heart",[31] "the recitors of the hymn will render service to Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa",[32] "those who learn this decad will attain His Feet"[33] etc. Other Āḷvārs too have the same conception regarding *mokṣa*. They too refer to *mokṣa* more or less in the same words and phrases. The words and phrases referred to by them are "*perunilam*" (Great Land),[34] "*peru vicumpu*" (Great Space),[35] "*umpar ulaku*"[36] (World of *Devas*), *Viṇṇakam*[37] (Celestial Abode), "*Nāraṇaṉ ulaku*"[38] "*Iṉpavīḻu*"[39] (an Abode of Bliss), "*Amarar ulakam*"[40] (World of Celestials), "*Vāṉōr kaṭinakar*"[41] (a City of Celestials with its ramparts) etc. Kulacēkarāḻvār describes the *mokṣa* idea in a negative way as "those who have mastered this deced of Kulacēkara will never go to Hell."[42] The description of *mokṣa* coincides more or less with the *Nitya-vibhūti* as described in the Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas* and other Vaiṣṇavite texts.

According to Vaiṣṇavism, Īśvara is the object of the knowledge which is the means, *upāya*, and also the object of the ~~knowledge~~ which is attainment: He is the means as being the giver of the desired fruit and the bestower of Grace, and likewise, He is *upēya* because Himself the object that is to be

---

29. ibid. 4.6: 11; 7.1 : 11; 10.1 : 11.
30. ibid. 4.9: 11.
31. ibid. 5.2: 11.
32. ibid. 6.5: 11; 8.9: 11.
33. ibid. 10.4: 11.
34. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 9.
35. ibid. 5.6: 5.
36. ibid. 11.4 : 10.
37. M.Tv. 68.
38. Perum. Tm. 7 : 11.
39. Tc. V. 120.
40. I. Tv. 41.
41. ibid. 88.
42. Perum. Tm. 5: 10.

reached. He is the ever-attained means *(Siddhōpāya)*.[43] As auxiliary to this means there are two other means, namely, *bhakti* and *prapatti*. The former is mainly based upon the teaching of the *Upaṇisads* and its adoption is restricted to the higher castes; the latter is meant for all and its source is to be traced mainly to the Vaiṣṇavite *Āgama*. In the case of those who have adopted *prapatti* as the sole and independent means, Īśvara takes the place of ther *upāyas*. In the case of others (i e) those that adopt *bhakti*, Īśvara whose favour has been won by *prapatti* (adopted as an auxiliary means to *bhakti*) intervenes and, standing in the place of rites and duties which are too hard for them in those situations which lie between the beginning of *karma-yoga* and the completion of the (prescribed) meditation, brings about the removal of sins and the manifestation of *sattva* which can result from their performance. He sees to it that the meditation or worship which can be adopted as an *upāya* is so complete as to bear fruit.

The path to *mukti* or *mokṣa* is referred to "*celkati*",[44] "*māk-kati*"[45] by the Āḷvārs. *Celkati* is the good path which a *jiva* has to choose and *māk-kati* is *mokṣa*. These two concepts in combination may be interpreted to mean the straight and shining path of *arcirādi gati* as mentioned in the *Chandogya Upanisad*[45](a). Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār mentions this in his *Ciṟut-tirumaṭal*[46] and elaborates it in his *Periyatiru-maṭal*.[47] The soul travels through the solar rays, reaches the sun, enters through a minute hole in the sun and then attains the place called *mokṣa* where, it is said, it enjoys the Lord. The making of a single *mukta* is a cosmic event, as it were, and even the celestials hail the entry of the finite self into infinity and sing hallelujahs in their own celestial way. The glorious

---

43. T.V.M. 3.5 : 10; P. Tv. 46.
44. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 5, 8
45. Mū. Tv 95.
45(a) Ch. Up. 4.15 : 5.
46. C. TML Kaṇṇi, 7, 8.
47. P. TML Kaṇṇi, 16, 17.

ascent of the soul to its original home has been vividly described by Nammāḷvār.[48]

The course of devotion involves a training in three stages known as *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga* in the progressive realization of *mokṣa*. These three stages constitute the to-be-attained means (*sādhyopāya*). The path of *karma* means the performance of certain kind of *karma* or rites and duties[49] as the result of knowledge acquired from the *śāstras* in regard to the true nature of self and the Universal Self. One should perfrom one's duties for the fulfilment of God's purpose; the person should do them subordinating his will completely and whole-heartedly to the divine will. The duties are done solely to please God. By thus working for the Lord, one not only renounces the fruits associated with them, but purifies one's heart. This purification is looked upon as the necessary result of so dedicating all one's deeds to God. This *karma-yoga* has several sub-divisions[50] which include such items as the adoration of the gods, the performance of austerities *(tapas)*, pilgrimage to sacred places, giving in charity, and sacrifices. Some of these rites and duties are referred to by the Āḷvārs Nammāḷvār says: "Enjoying the sight of Thy presence with my eyes, and offering flowers culled from all directions at Thy Feet to my hands' content, and dancing and singing of Thy praises";[51] "which deity other than the Lord Who created Brahmā to create the *Devas* and the whole universe deserves offerings of flower and ritual worship?";[52] "without separation from the Lord, offering Him holy water, and, after that, incense and

---

48. T.V.M. 10.9.
49. The rites and duties consist of (i) *nitya karma* or regular duties to be performed compulsorily (like the daily *sandhyāvandanam*), (ii) *naimittika karma* or rites to be compulsorily performed on specific occasions (like the eclipse of the sun or the moon), and (iii) such *kāmaya karmas* or rites as are optional and as have beer chosen to be within one's ability.
50. Bh. G. 4 : 25 and et seq.
51. T.V.M. 4.7 : 8.
52. ibid. 2.2 : 4.

flowers";[53] "Tiruvēṅkaṭam where the *Devas* led by their leader (Indra) attain salvation by worship with the choicest flowers, holy water, lamp and incense";[54] "Devotees and *Pakavars* who with *Puruṣa-sūkta* on their lips, in strict accordance with the ritual code, offer service at the Feet of the Lord with plenty of flowers, incense, lamps, sandal paste and holy water";[55] "Are not the days near when I can circumambulate and worship with folded palms the deity at Tiruvāraṉ-viḷai;[56] "Am I not sure to realize my aspiration to walk round the temple with fragrant holy water and to worship with folded hands;"[57] "Let us emancipate ourselves by service to the Lord and by worship of Him with choice flowers, holy water, lamp and incense";[58] "How great is the merit of those who worship the Lord at Tiruvaṉantapuram with the offer of flowers in strict accord with the ritual code!"[59] In this process the self-regarding sentiments like self-love and self-possession are subdued. Animal instincts and inclinations are transmuted into an organic craving for God, like baser metals are transmuted into gold in the furnace. The whole process is one of self-realization by self-renunciation; the earth-bound self then becomes spiritualised.

The path of knowledge is a stage of constant and uninterrupted contemplation, by one who has conquered his mind by *karma-yoga*, of his essential nature or the self as being distinct from matter (the body, the senses and the like) – his *svarūpa* which is the mode of Īśvara in virtue of its relation to Him as His body. *Jñāna-yoga* is a path of contemplation, of self-illumination and of self-renunciation leading to its positive sequel of self-realization. Contemplation is turning the out-going mind within with the help of *yogic* auxilaries like *yama* (self-restraint), *niyama* (observation of rites) and

---

53. ibid. 1.6:1.
54. ibid. 3.3:7.
55. ibid. 5.2:9.
56. ibid. 7.10:1.
57. ibid. 7.10: 2, 8, 9.
58. T.V.M. 9.3:9.
59. ibid. 10.2: 4; cf ibid. 10.2: 9; 10.2: 10; 10.5: 5; 10.5: 10; I. Tv. 67:

prāṇāyāma (the control of the breath) and seeking the inner quiet. In this state all activity is swallowed up. The *yogin* can arrest the outgoing tendency by thinking on thought itself, on contemplation on the nature of the *ātman*. Nammāḷvār prays: "O Father! lend me the helping hand of *jñāna* so that I may reach Thy inaccessible Feet."[60] When the purified self reflects on itself, all the thoughts are thought away; the contractions caused by *karma* and the confusions due to *avidyā* are then destroyed by the fire of *jñāna*. The *ātman* at this stage returns to itself and shines by itself and enjoys the quiet of *kaivalya*. It is no longer bound by *prakṛti* and its three *guṇas*, but attains calmness and serenity. This self-cognition itself is an orientation towards God-cognition. The *yogin* who has intuited the *ātman* sees the same self in all *jīvas* owing to the similarity of their spiritual intelligence. The seer who has a soul-sight and sweet reasonableness intuits the same *ātman* in a dog as in a god. In a higher stage he has a glimpse of Paramātman, the Supreme Self as the pervading identity in all *jivas*, and sees Him in all beings and all beings in Him. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār says: "With a complete shutting of the gates of the senses, and with an opening of the gate of God-knowledge, by kindling the blaze of *jñāna*, by making the body and the heart pine away for God, by such fully mature devotion one can realise the Lord with the discus."[61] In the next higher stage this spiritual experience is further enriched. Pēyāḷvār says: "The *jñānis* are those who can penetrate with knowledge the Lord Who is the inner meaning of the four *Vedas* and Who is immanent in their hearts."[62] The spiritual insight of *ātmajñāna* is completely acquired in the fourth stage by the exhibition of universal sympathy in which the *jñāni* realizes the kinship of all *jivas* and regards the joys and sorrows of others as his own. Nammāḷvār says: "May we all (entire mankind) never more wallow in this woeful state of false knowledge, evil conduct and filthy body?"[63] If he escapes the snare of being (perma-

---

60. ibid. 2.9: 2; cf. ibid. 1.7: 1.
61. Tc. V. 76.
62. Mū. Tv. 84.
63. T.V.R. 1.

nently) attracted by the pleasure of enjoying this vision which is so great as to create a distaste for all sense-pleasures, then he begins the practice of *bhakti-yoga* which is the direct means for the attainment of the supreme goal of enjoying Bhagavāṉ. While practising *bhakti-yoga*, the aspirant contemplates on Bhagavāṉ as the Inner self of his own self which is His body. The vision that he has already acquired of his own pure self is then useful, for it is only through it that he reaches its Inner Self, just as the cloth within which a gem is tied up is first to be seen before the gem itself can be seen. In this way the vision of one's self serves as a qualification or a stepping stone for the practice of *bhakti-yoga*. The chanters of a hymn of *Tiruvāymoḷi*, according to Nammāḻvār, will be blessed with *jñāna*.[64]

Bhakti-yoga is the special form of meditation which is of the nature of unsurpassed love and which has, for its object, the essential nature and form and qualities of Bhagavāṉ Who is not dependent on any one else, Who is not subject to the authority of any one else, and Who does not exist for the fulfilment of the purpose of any one else. It is a process in which the seeker after salvation sheds his egoism and ego-centric outlook, attunes himself to the will of God and yearns for eternal communion with Him. *Bhakti* is of the form of a continuous stream of knowledge which is of the nature of uninterrupted memory like the flow of oil streaming down continuously; it has clearness similar to that of visual perception; it grows from strength to strength by being practised every day untill the day of journey to Parmapada and terminates in the remembrance of the past moment. This *yoga* is the direct path to perfection as it leads ro the very heart of religious consciousness which consists in shifting the centre of reference from the *ātman* to the *Paramātman*. This stage effects a revolution in our life, which is of far greater importance than the Copernican revolution. While the astronomer realizes the littleness of the earth and the greatness of the sun that draws it to itself, the religious man or devotee knows the emptiness of the earth-bound self and the

64. T.V.M. 1.10: 11.

saving might of God Who is the source and centre of all living beings. The knowledge of the finite self has its religious fulfilment in the integral experience of the Infinite which is its ground and goal. The self is merged in the Supreme Self like the sponge in the sea. Nammāḷvār says: "To the Lord, the sandal paste for wearing is my heart; the garland is the garland of verses composed by me; the silken garment too consists of these; the bright ornaments are the folding of my arms in worship".[65] To this saint Kaṇṇaṉ (Kṛṣṇa) is everything: He is the food that he eats, the water he drinks, and the betel he chews.[66] Again the Āḷvār says: "Even if it is not given to me to worship Thee with cool flowers at the appropriate hours, I give over my very life as ornament to Thy fair-head, well decorated with flowers";[67] "I cry (for the Lord); I bow (before Him); I dance before Him; and I sing and rave".[68] Periyāḷvār's sentiment of *bhakti* runs like this: "Laying out the shrine of the heart, and installing the deity of Mātavaṉ there, and offering the flower of devotion at the point of death will enable one to escape the horrors of the world of death".[69] The whole hymn stresses this sentiment that thoughts of the Lord at the point of death will ensure salvation. The Āḷvār's foster-daughter says: "To worship the Lord with fresh flowers in a state of purity, to utter His glory with one's tongue and to cherish it in one's heart would dispose of past and future demerits as dust in fire".[70] Kulacēkarāḷvār's god-love is so intense that he says "All are mad to me; I am a mad man to all......... I have grown mad after the Lord".[71] In the whole of the decad the Āḷvār's madness after the Lord that is expressed. Again he says: "Just as wealth, even though spurned on by the devotee clings to him again and again (by God's Grace), so also I (the property of the Lord) again and again cling to

---

65. ibid. 4.3: 2.
66. ibid. 6.7: 1.
67. ibid. 4.3: 4.
68. ibid. 5.8 5.
69. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.5: 3.
70. T. Pv. 5.
71. Perum. Tm. 3: 8.

Thee though Thou may reject me;"[72] and further in the same hymn, "Even if You spurn me I have no one else to look up to; like a child put aside by its mother, in anger,[73] like a true wife ill-treated by her husband,[74] like a citizen looking up to the king though he be a despot,[75] like the lotus flower which unfolds itself only to the burning rays of the sun,[76] and like the crops that always look up to the clouds that never come,[77] I look up to Thee and rely on Thee even though Thou does not want me". This is a rare idea, a very difficult concept which has been very beautifully brought out by the Āḻvār in this hymn which has no equal elsewhere even among the verses of the *Nālāyiram*. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār expresses his devotion: "I am not going to let Thee out, Who have entered the heart of myself, who has the firm determination to attain salvation by worshipping Thee with the offer of eight kinds of fragrant flowers".[78] Bhaktisāra has expressed his devotion as that he has controlled the uncontrollable senses, rid himself of the interest in things of the world and concentrated all his attention on Him;[79] as a humble devotee, he has rooted out wrath and malice, controlled the destinies of the senses, and his devotion has been multiplying.[80] Again the saint says that he spends his time in reciting His glory, writing about it, reading about it, listening to accounts of it, prostrating before Him, performing service to Him, and offering worship to Him;[81] those who long for attaining to Paramapada soon, and so meditate constantly on the Lord are likely to regard their body itself as a disease;[82] those who contemplate the

72. Perum. Tm. 5: 9.
73. ibid. 5.1.
74. ibid. 5.2.
75. ibid. 5.3.
76. ibid. 5.6.
77. ibid. 5.7.
78. Peri. Tm. 3.5. 6.
79. Tc. V. 95.
80. ibid. 98.
81. Nāṉ. Tv. 63.
82. ibid. 79.

Lord of the ocean of milk continuously will be rid of the sins of the past generations attached to the soul, and will reach Paramapada.[83] Among the first three Āḷvārs Poykaiyāḷvār says: Those who unswervingly stick to the path of *bhakti* and worship Thee will find the Body of the Lord celebrated in the *Upaniṣads* incorporating Itself in them";[84] "My heart seeks nothing but Thy Feet; my tongue speaks of nothing but Thy glory".[85] Pūtattāḷvār says: "Making my heart the abode of the Lord, I offered Him the golden lotus of *bhakti*;"[86] "The faculties are ready; the heart is in it; the lotus flowers are in plenty; the time for His praise is so freely available;"[87] "My heart delights in meditating on Thy form; my tongue delights in celebrating Thy Feet; my body delights in dancing and singing the praises of Thy weapons;"[88] "It chanced me to perform service to Thee; I contemplated Thy Lotus-Feet; I identified myself with them in devotion"[89] Pēyāḷvār says: "Those who recite the *Vedas* well, acquire true knowledge, quell the five senses, practise self-control and then meditating on Him reach His presence;"[90] "If one, controlling the senses and prayerfully concentrating one's mind on the Lord, realises the pitfalls of *samsāra* and turns away from it, one can rise above the cycle of births."[91] This *bhakti-yoga* is also a means in accordance with the specific desire of the aspirant for acquiring lordship (in this world or in *svarga*) and other fruits (like *kaivalya*). Among the four kinds of devotees referred to in the *Gītā*[92] and *Mahābhārata*[93] the one who worships Bhagavān with exclusive devotion the best and he attains *moksa*.

---

83. ibid. 89.
84. M.Tv. 76
85. ibid. 88.
86. I. Tv. 4.
87. ibid. 21.
88. ibid. 32,33.
89. ibid. 80.
90. Mū. Tv. 12.
91. ibid. 79.
92. Bh. G. 7: 16.
93. M.Bh; Śānti. 350. 33-35

Bhakti-yoga which has thus been prescribed as the means of obtaining *mokṣa* has been called *para-bhakti.* Love of the Lord which results from intimacy with *sāttvikas* (and the scriptures) and which produces *para-bhakti* is also called *bhakti*, because it generates an eager desire to know Īśvsra with perfect clearness. The statements of Nammāḷvār as "the lotus-eyed Lord takes his abode in my eyes,"[94] "He will not go out of my eyes"[95] and others[96] describe the stage of *para-bhakti.* When this *para-bhakti* develops in its turn into a thirst or eager desire and determination to see the Lord it is called *para-jñāna.* "O Lord, Thou art the abode of attributes like *jñāna*, be blessed to show Thy whole self!",[97] "Vouchsafe Thy Grace so that I may see Thee"[98] and "May I see Thee some day !"[99] - these statements of Arjuna and the Āḷvār describe this stage of *bhakti.* By this keen desire alone the devotee wins the Grace of the Lord Who rewards him with a perfect visual perception of Himself for the time being. This visual perception is *para-jñāna.* From this perfect vision of the *svarūpa* of the Lord is born an excessive and unsurpassed love for Him and unquenchable spiritual thirst similar to that felt by a man suffering from great thirst at the sight of a tank. This (excessive and unsurpassed love for the Lord) is called *parama-bhakti* which produces an eager desire and determination to enjoy the Lord without any limitations,[100] as the devotee feels that it is impossible to live any longer without this experience of eternal bliss as described by Nammāḷvār[101] where he cries out that he will not hereafter allow the Lord to leave Him *(iṉi nāṉ pōkal oṭṭēṉ)* and that he must become one with the Lord and

94. T.V.M. 1.9 : 9.
95. ibid. 10.8 : 8.
96. ibid. 2.8 : 10; 3 2 : 10: 4.7 : 7; 5.7 : 5; 5.8 : 1; 6.3 : 1; 9.4 : 8; 10·4 : 9.
97. Bh. G. 11 . 4.
98. T.V.M. 8.1 : 1.
99. ibid. 6.9 4.
100. R.T.S. Ch. 9.
101. T.V.M. 10.10 : 1.

declares all this with an oath[102] that cannot be ignored by the Lord. It causes likewise an excessive eagerness in the Lord to give him *mokṣa* immediately and makes him attain it after quenching his great thirst for union; they are finally united in the realm of *mukti*. The soul is a glow with divine fire, but is not identical with it. As the life of our life, God feeds the soul and divinises it. Likewise the soul feeds on God; and in the unitive stage '*I*' becomes He and He becomes '*I*'. In the bliss of unitive consciousness, the soul-hunger of God and the God-hunger of the soul are both finally satisfied. The temporal pleasures of earth, the seductive joy of *svarga* and the joy of *kaivalya* are nothing when compared to the integral experience of Brahman. The ecstasy is only a momentary rapture, but the instant is construed as eternity. The soul is not passive, but energises enthusiastically and shares its joy with others.

A simple way of reaching the ultimate goal is also envisaged. This way is unqualified and absolute self-surrender, known as *Prapatti*. It is also called *Saraṇāgati*. It is the highest stage of God love. *Prapatti* stands in the place of *para-bhakti* to the man who adopts it as the direct and independent means. This way preserves the essentials of *bhakti*, dispenses with its predisposing causes or conditions, and omits the non-essentials like the need for ceaseless practice. It is thus a direct and independent means for salvation to those who do not belong to the three higher castes, and (likewise) also for those three higher castes who are wanting in *jñāna* or ability or both and to those who cannot endure any delay in the attainment of *mokṣa* and are extremely impatient. Since it will be the means of securing all desired objects, it has been prescribed in the place of *para-bhakti* for those who know their limitations. The only requisite for this means is the change of heart or contrition on the part of the *mumukṣu* and his absolute confidence in the saving Grace of the Rakṣaka. The supreme merit of this means lies in the universality of its appeal to all castes and classes, including even the *jīvas* in the sub-human bodies, the guarantee of salvation

---

102. ibid. 10.10 : 2.

to all *jivas* who cannot follow the arduous and precipitous path of *bhakti*, its intrinsic and independent value as means and the naturalness and ease in securing immediate effect.

The spiritual experience of the Tamil seers (Āḷvārs) is epitomized in the *Saraṇāgati* of Nammāḷvār who is extolled as the *super-prapanna* of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. The Āḷvār says: "Tariyēn iṉi uṉ caraṇam tantu eṉ caṉmam kaḷaiyāyē."[103]- 'Henceforward it is impossible for me to possess myself in misery without the *darsan* of Thy Feet'. He extends the hospitality of his divine experience to the whole world of *jivas*, with a view to establishing a spritual community of *bhaktas*. Says the saint: "What else is protection save to serve Kṛṣṇa born in Mattra?".[104] In another place the Āḷvār advising the people, says: "(God is) the Protector of those that surrender at His Feet";[105] "Lover of those that seek refuge at His Feet;"[106] and "is nearer to those who bow to His Feet."[107] The saint records his experience of performing the act of self-surrender at the Feet of the deity at Tirumōkūr; "There is no salvation other than surrender to Kāḷamēkam, the presiding deity at Tirumōkūr"[108] and "the lotus-like Feet of the deity is the only salvation."[109] The peak of his action is seen performed in the presence of Lord of the Tirupati Hills. The Āḷvār confesses to the Lord: "We have been for generations enslaved to Thee. May I be blessed with the attainment of Thy Feet;[110] My love and devotion to Thee are immeasurable. My I be blessed with the gift of attaining Thy Feet;[111] For me to reach Thy holy Feet I plead for sympathetic compassion in respect of me.[115] May I be guided,

---

103. ibid. 5.8: 7.
104. ibid. 9.1: 3; 5.
105. ibid. 9.10: 5.
106. ibid. 9.10: 6.
107. ibid 9 10: 8.
108. ibid. 10.1: 1; cf. ibid., 10.1: 2.
109. ibid. 10.1: 6.
110 ibid. 6.10: 1.
111. ibid. 6.10: 2.
112. ibid. 6.10: 3.

sinner as I am, to attain Thy Feet filled with flowers.[113] As long as Thou bearest the strong bow, I cannot lose hope. All that I need is to know when I can attain Thy Feet.[114] When is it that I can really attain Thy Feet not as in a dream, but in reality.[115] I have not performed penances to attain Thy Feet, but not for a moment can I possess myself because I am overborne by eagerness.[116] Like Kṛṣṇa Who has made His appearances to all those that deserved His *darśan*, even for me Thy presence should be ensured.[117] I cannot refrain even for a moment separation from Thy Feet, having trodden the footprints of my past generations enslaved to Thee.[118] Lakṣmī that has, abandoning Her abode of flowers, sought Her abode on Thy handsome bosom to abide in perpetuity, I, that have no stake in life, had entered the shelter of Thy Feet most appropriately to abide there for ever."[119] Almost all the Āḷvārs speak of their self-surrender to the Lord. They are satisfied with their relationship to the lordship of God instead on the relationship of thc mother or the father. All of them have practised this *tapas* or self-surrender to the Lord. Poykaiyāḷvār says: "The only means to dispel *karma*, disease and sin is self-surrender to the Lord."[120] Periyāḷvār says that God has planted His tender Feet on his head as one Pāṇṭiya king planted his Fish-emplem on the Mahāmēru mountain.[121] Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār requests the Lord to tell him 'Don't fear' as he had surrendered to Him.[122]

The Hindu religious tadition has recognised the place of intellect in spiritual development. It never encourages blind faith. Taking its clue from the words of Yājñavalkya

113. ibid. 6.10: 4.
114. ibid. 6.10: 5.
115. ibid. 6.10: 6.
116. ibid. 6.10: 7.
117. ibid. 6.10: 8.
118 ibid. 6.10: 9.
119. ibid. 6.10: 10.
120. M.Tv. 59.
121. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.4: 7.
122. Tc V. 92.

in his discourse to his wife Maitreyī in the *Upaniṣad*,[123] the Vedānta system recognises three stages in the path of self-realisation, viz., *śravaṇa, manana* and *nididhyāsana.* There is the teaching of the Master, the revelation of the Truth. The disciple listens to it and learns the Truth. This is *śravaṇa*, which is the study of the scriptures under a qualified Master. Religion, it is said, is not taught, but caught. Mere intellectual study of the Scriptures is not of much avail. The purport of them may be mixed. And so the meaning of the *Upaniṣads* should be learnt from a realised soul. *Manana* is reflection. After studying the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*, one should reflect upon it and try to understand why it alone is true and not any other teaching. There may arise innumerable doubts which should be dispelled by the process of cogitation. *Manana* does not reveal any new truth. It only serves to remove the doubts regarding the final truth that has already been received through *śravaṇa*. Intellectual conviction alone will not do for self-realisation. Old habits of thought may reassert themselves and stand obstacles in the way. To get over them, *nididyāsana* or deep contemplation is needed and this leads to the clarity of the vision of the Truth. Bhaktisāra indicates these three srages.[124] Through this graducted process what was at first was a mere theoretical knowledge of the Self becomes the direct perception or intuitive experience of the Absolute. It is the stage of inseparable communion or unity with God. The *Īṭu* interprets the terms "*terital*," "*niṉaitəl*" and "*eṇṇal*" as referring respectively to *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*.[125] Perimēlaḷakar translates them as *kēḷvi, vimarisam* (*vimarsa*) and *pāvaṉai (bhāvana)*.[126] Nammāḷvār uses the terms "*aṛivu*",[127] "*niṉaivu*",[128] *and* "*uṇarvu*".[129] "*Aṛivu*" is learning through

123. Br. Up. 2.4
124. Nāṉ. Tv. 63.
125. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 6.9: 11.
126. Kuṛaḷ. 353 (Commentary).
127. T.V.M. 1.1: 8; 5.5: 11.
128. ibid. 1.1; 3.
129. ibid. 1.3: 6; 3.5: 6.

"*śravaṇa*", "*niṉaivu*" is *manana*, and "*uṇarvu*" is *nididhyāsana.* The phrase "*aṭi-cērtal*"[130] used by the saint may be taken to mean self-surrender, the final communion – the "*prapatti*" or "*ātma nivētana*" referring to what Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives us as His final messege.[131] The phrases "*tāḷ-cērtal*,"[132] "*tiruvaṭi aṭaital*",[133] and "*pātam cērtal*"[134] may also be taken as referring to this *niṣṭha* Out of the clearness of vision and of the firmness of conviction comes the unloosening embrace of real communion. Does not this saint say in another context, "uṉṉai nāṉ piṭittēṉ koḷ cikkeṉavē"?[135]

The Āḷvār speaks of *yoga* also, besides *caryā* and *kriyā*. The above description is in a way *yoga*. But the *yoga* system refers to the eight stages of contemplation.[136] Those stages are specially designed to draw the mind from the outgoing tendency and dispersal, to subdue its *vāsanas* and to centre it in *samādhi* As bondage is a descent to the world of *samsāra*, *mukti* is the process of retracing the steps and returning to the spiritual home in God. The whole scheme of *upāsana* is governed by this central concept. The *upāsana* promotes spiritual intimacy and the unitive consciousness. The Lord accepts the flower of devotion more than the flower offerings of outer devotion and it is the eight-petalled flower of *ahimsa*, kindness, patience, truth, self-control, *tapas*, inwardness and *jñāna*. The result is that the Lord, with all the three worlds in His stomach, had filled 'my mind'.[137]

The final state is what is called communion or identity. That is *jñāna*. It is not mere emotion divorced from intellect. It is emotion born out of *jñāna*. It is spoken of variously by

---

130. ibid. 6.10: 2; 4.1: 2; 4.9: 11.
131, Bh. G. 18: 66.
132. T.V.M. 3.2: 2.
133. ibid. 4.9: 10.
134. ibid. 6.10: 5.
135. ibid. 2.6: 1.
136. *Yogasūtra* 2: 29.
137. T.V.M. 8.7: 8.

Nammālvār as "*kātal*",[138] "*kātanmai*",[139] "*vetkai*",[140] "*anpu*",[141] and "*avā*".[142] It is a melting of the heart. 'They (the devotees) will', says Nammālvār, 'like the sands amidst a fountain, melt as a liquid product' - "ūrrinkan nunmaṇal-pōl urukā-nirpār nīrāyē".[143] We know that love is a union and inseparability and both these aspects are emphasized in the poems of Ālvārs. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism defines Brahman the Absolute as Bhuvanasundara or God the Beautiful and regards the mystic experience of communion with Him as the consummation of the philosophy of love. This Divine Love is Universal Love and the seers and saints are characterized by their love and sympathy. It is a happy blend of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. It is "*matinalam*"[144] as our Ālvār calls it and "*jñānam-kaninta nalam*"[145] as Amutanar terms it.

The paths of devotion and self-surrender have more relevance to the position of God in Vaiṣṇavism than those of *karma* and *jñāna* as such. To fall in line with the *Upaniṣadic* concept that knowing Him is the means of obtaining final release,[146] the great exponent Rāmānuja evolved a very convincing exposition of *bhakti, jñāna* and *prapatti*, according to which all these represent certain stages of *jñāna* itself. All the same, stress is laid more on the *bhakti* and *prapatti* aspects of *jñāna*. It is in the light of this stress that the three esoteric doctrines have come to be formulated as the basis of the Vaiṣṇavite religion. These three secrets (*rahasya-traya*) contain the essentials of Vedānta in terms of *tattva, hita* and *puruṣārtha*. The Lord Himself has expounded the technique and value of self-surrender. The three secrets are known as *mūla-mantra, dvaya* and *carama-śloka* of which the first states

---

138. T.V.M. 4.7 : 11; 7.3 : 8.
139. ibid. 6.1 : 1.
140. ibid. 10.3 : 2.
141. P.Tv. 8.
142. T.V.M. 10.10: 10; TVR. 84.
143. ibid. 6.8 : 11.
144. ibid. 1.1 : 1.
145. R.N. 66.
146. Taitt. Ar. 3.12: 7.

in a nutshell, the second makes the meaning more explicit and the third elaborates it still further. These three mysteries (*mantram*) which are an epitome of the truths that ought to be known and of the means of attaining salvation, which are the distinctive, unique and exclusive doctrines of this system of religion and philosophy are invaluable and therefore to be preferred like ambrosia in the ocean.

The *mūla-mantra* is otherwise known as *tirumantra*; it is the eight-lettered formula whose meaning is 'Om! salutation to Nārāyaṇa!' It has been stated to contain everything within itself, and, if it is known the meaning of everything becomes known. This *mantra* helps us to understand such things as our essential nature (*svarūpa*) which finds true happiness only in being the *śeṣa* of the supreme Being. By that (revelation), it creates a longing for the supreme Goal of attainment preceded by the removal of all obstacles thereto and also a feeling of urgency (in regard to that attainment) whereby the competency for the adoption of the means becomes perfected. "This eternal *mūla-mantra* is therefore the highest of all *mantras*; of all secrets this is the supreme secret; of all things that purify, this is the most purificatory".[147] It is the essence of all the *Vedas*; it is capable of removing all evil influences; it is the means of obtaining all the objects desired by men; it helps in the adoption of all *upāyas;* it can be uttered by all castes either in its *Vedic* form (with *aum*) or in its *tāntric* form (without the *aum*), in accordance with their respective competence. The Āḷvārs sing its praise with delight; "with the help of the garland of verses (which constitute the *Prabandha*) I could acquire a full realisation of the great *tirumantra*, namely, Namō Nārāyaṇa";[148] "with the highest and the learned in the Scriptures listen to and learn by heart (*śravaṇa* and *manana*) are the names of the Lord (which constitutes the *mantras*)";[149] "the tongue is ready in the mouth; it does not require to be chanted without taking breath, the comparatively short,

147. *Nāradīyam*, 1:11.
148. M.Tv. 57.
149. ibid. 66.

eight-lettered *mantra* which is the easiest means of salvation";[150] "those who constantly chant the name of Nārāyaṇa with a full understanding are blessed";[151] "I cannot deem those who omit to chant the name of the Lord to be men at all O mind! deem it thy duty to utter His name";[152] "the name of the red-eyed Lord is pleasant to the ear; it is the refuge of all the inhabitants of the earth; He is the theme of all verses........and the essence of the *Vedas* too"[153] "those who have been initiated by the *ācārya* into the *mantra* with eight letters and utter it with proper *niṣṭha* are capable of ruling over Paramapada";[154] "you were devotees that sang the name of the Lord saying 'Namō Nārāyaṇāya' so that country and town might understand";[155] "by uttering the holy name 'Namō Nārāyaṇāya' in the proper way (i.e.) without seeking any material gain";[156] "if one utters on one's lips the great *tirumantra* with folded palms on one's head at the time of death, one is not likely to be sent afterwards back to this world at all, but only to Paramapada"[157] and again "the utterance of the *praṇava mantra* in the proper fashion and worship of the sea-hued Lord are sure to place one among the Eternals".[158] In one of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's hymns the phrase "Nārāyaṇa eṉṉum nāmam" (the name of Nārāyaṇa) occurs as a refrain in the last line of all the verses, the whole of which is a celebration of the efficacy of the *mantra*.[159] The babbling of the name of the Lord Vāmana–Tirivikrama will wipe out the sorrow of birth"[160] Nammāḷvār says: "Ye who aspire to reach the twin Feet of Kaṇṇaṉ, meditate on no name

150. ibid. 95.
151. I.Tv. 20.
152. ibid 44.
153. Nāṉ. Tv. 69.
154. Tc. V. 77; cf. ibid. 78.
155. *Tiruppallāṇṭu*, 4.
156. ibid. 11.
157. Periyal. Tm. 4.5 : 2.
158. ibid. 4.5 : 4.
159. Peri. Tm. 1.1; cf. ibid. 6.10.
160. ibid. 3.2 : 4; cf. ibid. 5.9 : 7, 8; 8.10 : 3.

else than Nārāyaṇa's".[161] The seers (*ṛṣis*) too, have declared: "Many were the great seers like Sanaka who attained the abode of Viṣṇu by uttering the eight-lettered *mantra*".[162] "Just as among the deities there is no one superior to Nārāyaṇa, there is, among the *mantras*, no *mantra* superior to *aṣṭākṣara*".[163]

The *praṇava* in the *mula-mantra* sums up the wisdom in the sacred sound. The *Upaniṣadic* text distinguishes *praṇava* as the bow, the self as the arrow, Brahman as the target and the act of surrender as the hitting of the target.[164] Sāṇḍilya has explained the way in which the meaning of *praṇava* should be considered: "This supreme Being is of such and such a nature and the *jīva* is of such and such a nature. *Yoga* is said to be a knowledge of the relationship between the two (that Īśvara is the *śeṣi* and the *jīva* the *śeṣa*)".[165] This meaning is elaborated as follows: The *a* in *praṇava* (*aum*) is Viṣṇu Who creates, sustains and destroys the world; the *m* (in it) means the *jīva*, who exists for the fulfilment of the purposes of Viṣṇu. The *u* (in it) indicates that this relationship between the two can exist *only* between them (and no others). So *praṇava* which consists of three letters and is the essence of the (three) *Vedas* reveals this meaning"[166] Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār also explains this meaning: "I am the servant of Bhagavan, the Lord of Tirukkaṇṇapuram; how am I entitled to be the servant of any one else?"[167] The word '*namō*' of the *mantra* which means 'I adore' prescribes the abandonment of all egoism *(ahaṅkāra)* or self-naughting, and *saraṇāgati* as the chief *hita* or *upāya*. and it also connotes the truth that God is the only goal of life. The term '*Nārāyaṇa*' in the *mantra* is significant and singular. It signifies God as the One without a second, not in the

161. T.V.M. 10.5 : 1.
162. *Nāradīyam*. 1 : 16.
163. ibid. 1 : 42.
164. Mun. Up. 2.2: 4.
165. *Sāṇḍilva Smṛti* 5.17.
166. *Aṣṭa Ślokī*, 1.
167. Peri. Tm. 8.9 : 3.

mathematical, but in the metaphysical sense. As the letter *a* and Nārāyaṇa, Paramātman is immanent in all beings as their life without losing His transcendental eminence and is the Saviour of all that redeems all *jīvas* from their evil career. He is the ground of all existence and the giver of all good. Nara is the letter *m* of *praṇava* and it refers to the universe of *cit* and by implication (*upalakṣaṇa*), *acit* also of which Nārāyaṇa is the pervading Self. Nārāyaṇa is immanent in *nara* and is also the goal or *ayana* of the *nara*. Thus the *mūla-mantra* as a whole and in each of its parts proclaims that Nārāyaṇa alone is the source of all existence, the goal of all experience and the means of realizing that goal.[168] Nammāḷvār distinctly brings out the meaning of the word '*nārayaṇa*' : "He who has, as His *seśās*, countless *jīvas* with knowledge and bliss as their attributes and with self-luminousness as their nature and also His own noble qualities - that Nārāyaṇa"[169] and "Nārāyaṇa is the Lord of all the seven worlds".[170] In these two passages are implicit (Bhagavan's) possessing the two kinds of attributes, namely, freedom from defects and possession of all auspicious and noble qualities and likewise, His possession of the two *vibhūtis* viz., this material universe (*līlā-vibhūti*) with all the sentient and non-sentient beings in it and the transcendental region of eternal glory (*nitya-vibhūti*) with all that it contains. The *mūla-mantra* is also an expansion of the *praṇava* and it makes the meaning more clear by equating Brahman with Nārāyaṇa and explaining the means to *mokṣa* as self-gift to the *śeṣi* to whom the self belongs by divine right.

The *dvaya* is so called because it treats of two points, namely, the means and the goal of attainment (the *upāya* and the *upēya*). It is a gem of a *mantra* and has pre-eminence over the other *mantras* as it brings out the full implications of the supreme *tattva* or truth as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa or Nārāyana and Śrī, namely, "I take refuge at the Feet of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Salutation to Śrīman Nārāyaṇa". The first

168 R.T.S. Ch. 23 and 27.

169. T.V.M. 1.2: 10.

170. ibid. 2.7:2.

part reveals that the *jīva* has no other refuge than Nārāyaṇa, and the second that he exists for no purposes other than those of Nārāyaṇa, while in both parts, the idea of the *jiva* having no other support (*ādhāra*) is evident (from the word '*nārāyaṇa*'). The idea enshrined in this *mantra* is implicit in the *Upaniṣad*[171] and it is elaborated by Rāmanuja in his *Gadya* and by Vedānta Deśika in his *Rahasya-trayasāra*[272] and exemplified by Āḷavantār.[173] The meaning of this *mantra* is also implicit in the two *ślokas* of *Rāmāyaṇa* viz., "He (Lakṣmaṇa) fill at the two feet of his brother" and said in the presence of Sīta,[174] "Thou shalt be happy Thyself with Sītā on the slopes of the mountains. Whether Thou art awake or asleep, I (Lakṣmaṇa) will render every form of service to Thee".[175] The man who is not for any other *upāya* or for any other end or object (in view) has full competence for the adoption of this *mantra*. Nammāḷvār has stated the meaning of this great *mantra* : "Meditate soon on the Feet of Nārāyaṇa and His consort and acquire a new life".[176] Here the words up to 'and acquire' express the *upāya* stated in the first part of the *mantra* and what follows indicates the meaning of the second part. Again the Āḷvār says "The man that has sought the Feet of the Lord dark as the raincloud (*mukilvaṇṇan*) and who has thereby attained new life",[177] and "O Thou on Whose chest abides Lakṣmī because She cannot endure separation from Thee even for an instant'"[178] etc. Thus the meaning of this *mantra* is that redemption is the result of Lakṣmi's mediation, and that the soul should realize its utter destitution and seek no other refuge than the Lord.

The *carama-śloka* which is the final instruction of the Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the *Gītā* teaches how self-surrender

---

171, Sv. Up. 6: 18.
172. R.T.S. Ch. 28.
173. *Śtotra-ratna* 21.
174. Ram. Ayodya 31: 2.
175. idid. 31: 27.
176. T.V.M. 4.1: 1.
177. ibid. 7.2: 11.
178. ibid. 6.10: 10.

is to be performed. A knowledge of this supreme secret is intended to remove the sorrows of life and afford the stability of salvation. The *mantra* declares that Bhagavan is Himself the already existing and established means for attaining Him, for He is ever ready to help us to attain Him, and that, in order to secure His help, we have yet to accomplish or adopt a means which is self-surrender to the Lord. "Renounce all *dharmas* and take refuge in Me; I shall release you from all sins. Grieve not."[179] Here *prapatti* is explicitly enjoined as the sole means for the release of the soul. All other *sādhanas* such as external worship, deeds of piety, study of the scriptures, *yogic* meditation etc., are only auxiliaries that may lead to the final act of surrender. The woman saint Āṇṭāḷ says: "If the Lord reclining on the serpent should forget His own word of assurance (the *carama-śloka*) that He is the first and last refuge, He will be guilty, in the opinion of the world, of cruelty to a maid."[180] Nammāḷvār says: "Those who know the Lord's word of assurance (the *carama-śloka)* cannot but be His slaves, and no other person's."[181] According to this *mantra* the Lord is ultimately both the endeavour and the goal, the *upāya* and *upēya*. The *sādhyōpāya* is the act of self-surrender to the will of the Saviour Who is the inner ruler and the *siddhōpāya* is the Lord Himself. The Lord reveals Himself to the *prapanna*, who seeks Him as His absolute refuge. The sinner seeks God and is saved, and God seeks the sinner and is satisfied. The unique value of this *mantra* lies in its universal appeal to all sinners to seek refuge in Him and be saved.

The mercy of the Lord could not brook the sight of the misery and at the mere sight of the pitiable plight of His devotee the flood-gates of the Lord's mercy will be opened as in the case of Arjuna; and on account of him the whole race of grieving humanity, who are out to reach Him, has been deluged by the divine out-pouring of Mercy, Grace and Love.

---

179. Bh. G. 18 : 66.
180. Nāc. Tm. 8: 9.
181. T.V.M. 7.5 : 10.

The words '*Do not grieve*'[182] have been addressed, as it were, from the Charioteer's seat in Arjuna's car to the whole of humanity who crave for the Lord's company, hanker for His Grace and pine away in love. The cult of *prapatti* is based on this Declaration of Divine Dispensation. The first and foremost qualification for this act of self-surrender is the feeling of unutterable woe and dire helplessness. *Ākincanya* or the realization of self-nothingness (the utter feeling of inability to other means) is a *sine qua non* for *prapatti*. *Ananyagatitva* or a feeling of not having any other means and a turning away from all other refuge than Bhagavan is another condition for the person who adopts this means One must feel one's desolateness in all its aspects, and comprehend the full significance of one's spiritual solitariness. One must also realize that one is alone, absolutely alone in this huge and vast world with nothing, and no one, not even himself, to rely on except God. The sense of solitariness must be forced upon one to such an extent that one can clearly see one's soul in naked helplessness, when the encasing body, and not merely friends and relatives, is cast off, and it is left to march out on its lonely quest after God. Nammāḷvār says: "God only is everything for me; He is the group of beautiful damsels, abundant wealth, good children and revered father and mother to me"[183] The sense of one's weakness must be so deeply realized that what will be left to him here below is only to cry helplessly even as a Nammāḷvār who felt that he had been banished from God's Grace and locked up in a prison. It is only such intense grief that can provoke and invoke the Grace of the Lord, for He is not an unwise Being to waste His love on those who do not want Him, however much He may feel compassionate towards them. The words '*Do not grieve*' clearly indicate that the person to whom they are addressed is afflicted and depressed by a consuming grief from which nothing but the Lord's assurance can uplift him. If, however, the seeming devotee lulls his consciousness by the thought that the Lord is *dōṣa-bhōgya* (lover of sins), and that therefore his very sins will save him, or if he hypocritically says

182. Bh. G. 18 : 66.
183. T.V.M. 5.1 : 8.

that as God's Grace is not conditioned by any effort on the part of the devotee (*nirhētuka*), and thereby gets confirmed in his spiritual indolence, no God can or will save him. No doubt God is *dōṣa-bhōgya* and loves His true devotees with all their faults. He is certainly *avyāja vatsala*, and gives of His love for no recompense or return. But He must and will be satisfied that there is true love or craving in the *upāsaka* (devotee) towards Him, and that it is not a lip-deep avowal, having its root in indolence, hypocrisy and sinfulness, with never the slightest pangs of grief or remorse in the heart. To say that a Vasiṣṭha or a Vāmadeva pursuing the path of *bhakti-yōga* is rejected and preference is accorded to a pretending *prapanna*, who gloats over his sins as his saviours, and revels in his ignorance and indolence with a covert sneer and an illconcealed contempt for spiritual effort and spiritual endeavour, may be a catching system; but it cannot be true. God rewards the *prapanna* sooner because of the intense and consuming desire of his heart that cries for quick realization. *Prapatti* is a momentary action and it has been truly remarked that it is more severe and more difficult than *bhakti*. An archer's action in discharging an arrow for hitting a target may be constituted of several separate acts (like observing the object, taking the aim and discharging the arrow) and yet it is all accomplished in a single moment. Similar is the act of surrendering (to the Lord) the responsibility of one's protection.[184] That this surrender of the responsibility of protection (*bhāra-samarpaṇa*)[185] should be chiefly thought of while uttering *mantras* of *prapatti* is clearly stated by the Saviour Himself, Who undertakes the responsibility: "With this *mantra* one should surrender one's self to Me. The one who has surrendered to Me the responsibility of doing what should be done will become one who has done one's duty.[186]" God must be made to feel that nothing but His saving Grace can put an end to the *mumukṣu's* disconsolate affliction, born of love towards Him, and seeking for ultimate and early fulfilment in Him. Till that stage is reached wherein love

---

184. Mun. Up. 2 4.

185. For the aṅgas (accessories of *prapatti*) vide R.T.S. Ch. 11.

186. *Sātvaki Tantra* (Quoted by Vedānta Deśika.)

finds response, and desire gets satisfaction, one has got to go on weeping, wailing, sorrowing, bemoaning, and lamenting, tearing out one's heart in misery and in despair as Nammāḷvār did under the celebrated Tamarind Tree at Āḷvārtirunakari. And not till the Glory of God has settled on one, and one has been gathered to the breast of his Beloved, and folded within the loving embrace of the Divine Arms, can this weaping cease, and yield place to the endless ecstasy of the *mukta*, rejoicing in the company of the Lord, revelling in the Beauty of His auspicious Form, and rhapsodying in the highest Bliss of Divine Communion.

These three *mantras* reveal also the role of Divine Grace in the play of God seeking man and man seeking God. The self which cries unable to bear the mundane suffering, manages to bring God near itself.[187] The *mūla-mantra* explains the theory of self-surrender, the *dvaya-mantra* elaborates it and also shows how it is to be practised, and the *carama-śloka* explicitly prescribes self-surrender as the means to be adopted by the aspirant to *mokṣa* who is incapable of *Bhakti-yaga* and expressly promises him release from all the accumulated load of sins that prevents his enjoyment of birthright of absolute service to the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha. It has been stated by our ancient *ācāryas* that these three *mantras* have been enshrined in the four compositions of Nammāḷvār: the purport of *tirumantra* has been included in his *Tiruviruttam* and *Tiruvā-cirivm*, that of *carama-śloka* in his *Periyatiruvantāti* and that of *dvaya* in his *Tiruvāymoḷi.*[188]

The Āḷvārs advise people not to put the physical frame or its limbs to any undue strain and subject it to mortification. Even the adoption of the postures of *yoga* for *bhakti* puts the senses to considerable strain. The limbs shall not be allowed to wither away nor need any one fast. The five senses shall not be mortified. The soul shall not suffer thus and perform

187. cf. Tyāgarāja's kirtana "*Tanayuni brovo*" in Bairavi raga where the child's cry to the mother is described to bring the mother to the spot where the child is lying.

188. A.H. Sūt. 208, 209, 210.

penance.[189] There is no need also to eat raw and unripe fruits, nor shall one stand on aching legs. It is also not necessary to perform severe penance amidst five fires. It is enough instead to think of God and proceed to Citrakūṭam.[190] It is thus found that a synthetic approach is more in the Vaiṣṇavite religion in the matter of adopting the means for obtaining final release. Basic knowledge is essential to ascertain the particular means which one can take up with confidence. Every aspirant shall get instructions from a spiritual preceptor who alone could guide him in the path which he is competent to pursue.[191] Curiously enough, it is not every individual that gets the desire aroused in him for feeling the need to have spiritual guidance. God's Grace, merit, acquired involuntarily, His compassion, absence of hatred for God and inclination towards Him and talks with good men arouse in man a desire to get a spiritual teacher and make him to get one [192]

Above all this, devotion to Viṣṇu is essential to get any thing, whether one has or not a spiritual preceptor or qualification for adopting the particular means for obtaining salvation. This devotion may begin with simple adoration such as worshipping with flowers and bowing at His Feet. The concept of the God-head, as evolved by the Āḻvars, consists in the admission of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity. According to these saints a careful study of the nature of several deities are to be attempted in order to arrive at the idea of Supreme God. Worship of such a deity bestows supreme knowledge and devotion on the person who offers it. That person could get rid of the evil effects of the deeds committed by him.[193] Not any amount of self-mortification enables the

---

189. Peri. Tm. 3.2 : 1.
190. ibid. 3.2 : 2? cf. P. Tv. 13; Mu. Tv. 76.
191. Vide. *Guruparamparāsāra* where Kṣatrabhandhu and Puṇḍarīka are said to have attained final release through having a spiritual preceptor.
192. R.T.S. Ch. 1.
193. Tc. V. 74; T.V.M. 1.6 : 8.

aspirant to behold Him.[194] Love for Him brings Him near the devotee.[195] That Viṣṇu is the Supreme deity to be worshipped is evidenced by Mārkaṇḍēya.[196] There is no protector for humanity other than Kṛṣṇa.[197] He is to be worshipped not mearly for obtaining *moksa* but also for any pursuit in life.[198] A concept of this kind leads to the conclusion that other deities need not be worshipped for any favour.[199] Viṣṇu is not merely the Supreme Deity but the foremost and first among the spiritual preceptors.[200]

Srī Vaiṣṇavaite theism equates God-head with the dual self of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa or Śrīyah-pati[201]. The Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas* describe Him as being always with Lakṣmī who Herself is designated as *Viṣṇu-śakti*.[202] The two-fold spiritual form of Brahman as Lord and Śri is philosophically inseparable though functionally distinguishable.[203] The cosmic ruler is ruled by love, and Lakṣmī resides in the ever-blooming lotus of love and is the very heart of the divine nature. Nammāḷvār speaks of this concept of dual self as 'Harbouring Lakṣmī with gazelle-like eyes in Your bosom' - "mān ēy nōkki maṭavāḷai mārpil koṇṭāy"[204]; 'the bosom with Goddess Lakṣmī on it draws my spirit towards it' - "tirumaṭantai cēr tiru-ākam eṉ āvi īrum";[205] 'the One on Whose bosom sits the Goddess of the Lotus Flower' - "allimātar amarum tirumārpiṉaṉ[206]; 'Nārayaṇa, the kindly eyed one, with Lakṣmī eternally resting

194. ibid., 75.
195. ibid. 76.
196. T.V.M. 5.2 : 7.
197. Periyāḷ. T.m. 5.3: 6; T.V.M. 2.2 : 1.
198. M.Tv. 59.
199. Nāṉ. Tv. 66, 75.
200. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.2 : 8.
201. *Puruṣa-sūkta* describes Him as "Hriśca le laksmīśca patnyau".
202. L.T. 2: 11, 12.
203. *Śrī Sūkta* speaks as "Īśvarīṁ sarva bhūtānām".
204. T.V.M. 1.5: 5.
205. ibid. 9.9: 6.
206. ibid. 9.10: 10.

on Himself' - "enrum tiru mey uraikinra ceṅkaṇmāl";[207] 'Lakṣmī on the lotus, determined not to part from Him even for a moment' - "akalakillēn irayum enru alarmēlmaṅkai urai mārpā";[208] 'Srīman Nārāyaṇa with Goddess Lakṣmī set on His bosom' - "tikaḷkinra tirumārpil tirumaṅkai tannōṭum tikaḷkinara tirumālār"[209]; 'the one harbouring the lotus-seated Śrī in His garlanded bosom' - "vaṇkamalat tirumātinait taṭaṅkoḷ tārmārpinil vaittavar";[210] 'O Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, into Whose bosom the fair Goddess Lakṣmī on the lotus with Her collirium-blackened eyes throws Herself' - "maiyār karuṅkaṇṇi kamalamalar mēl ceyyāḷ tirumārpinil cēr tirumālē";[211] 'the one who seats in His bosom the flower-seated Lakṣmī' - "malarmēl uraivāḷ uraimārpinan";[212] and so on. There are innumerable references both in the works of this Āḷvār and in those of other Āḷvārs to this dual concept. The Lord revealed Himself to the three seers at Tirukkōvalūr only in the dual form and the God-possessed Pēyāḷvār gave expression to this form beginning his verse with "tiruk-kaṇṭēn" (I saw Lakṣmī). 'The One on Whose chest abides Lakṣmī' - "tiru amar mārpān",[213] "malarmakaḷ nin ākattāḷ",[214] "neṭumalarāḷ mārvan",[215] pūmakaḷ tikaḷum tirumārpan",[216] "mātu ukanta mārvar",[217] "tiru irunta mārvan"[218] and "the One with Śrī in His bosom' - "*Tirumārpan*",[219] can be cited as examples. The word '*tirumāl*' meaning 'Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmī' (*tiru*-Lakṣmī; *māl*-Nārāyṇa) occurs in a number of

---

207. ibid. 10.4: 2.
208. ibid. 6.10: 10.
209. ibid. 10.6: 9.
210. ibid. 4.2; 7.
211. ibid. 9.4: 1
212. ibid. 4.5: 2.
213. ibid. 8.6: 3.
214. M. Tv. 28.
215. I. Tv. 52.
216. Mū. Tv. 37.
217. ibid. 54.
218. ibid. 57 and Nān. Tv. 92
219. T.V.M. 3.7.: 8; 7.6: 6, 7; 8.3: 7; *Periyāl. Tm.* 1.8: 4; *Perum. Tm.* 2: 8. *Peri. Tm.* 3.1: 2; 6.2: 2; 6.3: 9; 6.10: 3; 7.7: 1; 8.4; 1; 8.6: 1.

places in the Āḻvārs' hymns.[220] The Lord rules the world by His relentless law of *karma* and His holy wrath against the evil-doer is inescapable, but the rigour of *karma* is overpowered by the redemptive love of *kṛpā*. Evil is destroyed and the evil-doer saved. As the Lord rules by law and Śrī rules by love, the love of law and the law of love are so vitally intertwined in the divine nature as to render nugatory any attempt at the philosophic analysis of their exact nature. The majesty of the holy law of justice is eternally wedded to the all-conquerring might of mercy.[221] Śrīyahpati as Lord and Śrī as a second self constitute a kind of one in two and two in one and their co-operative identity is indispensable to the seeker after salvation. The concept of Śrīyahpati therefore reconizes the foundational truth of ethical religion, that the holiness of law is ever wedded to the forgiveness of love. Each acts and reacts on the other, and in their interaction lie the stability of the social and moral order and the salvability of the sinner. Nammāḻvār says : "I have taken refuge with my Mother : one of my Mothers, - the Earth; for Her sake You undertook a mighty exploit by incarnating Yourself as a boar; for obtaining the other Mother Lakṣmī, You churned the very ocean. If they are dear to You, and I am dear to Them, how can You not but be dear to me? Hence my salvation by mediation is secure against everything that might conspire such an end. Once bound to You thus, I am so secure that neither You cannot shake me off, nor I can shake You off".[222]

Even in worldly life the father punishes a way-ward son while the mother pleads for him and lessons the punishment

220. T.V.R. 7; 48, 62, 87, 88, 95, 100; P. Tv. 10, 69; *Periyāl.Tm* 1.1 : 10; 3.5 : 6; 3.6 : 1; 3.6 : 10; 4.1 : 5; 5.1 : 3, *Nac. Tm.* 5.8; 9.3; 14.8; *Perum. Tm.* 4: 9; *Peri. Tm* 5.6 : 7; 6.3 : 2; 6.5 : 10; 6.10 : 6; 7.7 : 9; 8.9 : 2; 10.6 : 4; 10.6 : 6; 10.4 : 10; 10.7 : 10; Naṉ. Tv. 14.

221. T.P. 85.

222. T.V.M. 10.10 : 7; It is said that Parācara Paṭṭar in his dying exhortation to his disciples has advised them to recite this holy verse of Nammāḻvār along with the holy *dvaya* - *mantra* (Vide : Bhag. Vis. Book X. 10.10: 7). Lakṣmī is therefore said to have three forms or play three roles, namely, *siddhopāya sādhyōpāya* and *puruṣa-kāra*.

or saves him from punishment. The very nature of the father is generally enshrined in law and justice while that of the mother always goes with love and excuse. The Vaiṣṇavite theology has based its dual form of God-head on this analogy. The concept typifies the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God designed to inspire the hope of universal salvation. It reminds the seeker after God that Nārāyaṇa is not only the source and centre of the universe, but He is also the Lord of Love and that Śrī resides in the heart of Nārāyaṇa to redeem the sinning sundered self from its sinfulness. Among the six meanings of the word '*Śrī*' the most relevant one is the idea of Her converting Īśvara as Ruler into Saviour by Her timely intercession and mediation on behalf of the repentent sinner. In the epic conflict between the ideas of retribution and forgiveness, law rules over love in the moral realm, and the two are balanced in ethical religion. But in the sphere of the religion of redemption, mercy dominates over retributive justice and transforms the love of law into the law of love. Lakṣmī is *svāmin* to the *jīva*, and as mediator (*puruṣa-kāra*) she mediates on behalf of the sinner and is the eternal link of love between the Ruler and transgressor. She transforms the former into the Saviour and the latter iuto the penitent seeker after pardon. By virtue of her motherhood in relation to the souls and wifehood in relation to the Lord, she is eminently fitted to play the role of mediator between the two. She becomes the Īśvara and changes His law of *karma* into the rule of *kṛpā*.[223]

---

223. The conversation said to have taken place between Nañcīyar and Paṭṭar may be quoted as relevant to our point. Nañciyar put this question to Paṭṭar: "For salvation, is it enough to resort directly to the Universal Lord? Why should it be necessary to go to Him by mediation of the Mother ?" To which Paṭṭar replied: "In nature we know the protection which the mother affords to a child when it is found guilty and the father is thereby angry. The mother knows exactly the opportunity when the father is in the proper mood to be appeased and made to forgive the child, and renew his natural love for him. Even so is the case with God in protecting His creatures He is the Judge; as mother He is the Forgiver". This is the principle of vicarious redemption and the quality of mercy existing in God to overflowing. This is also the meaning of the holy formula: "Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa". (Vide: *Īttiṉ Tamilākkam* Vol. I (Commentary on T.V.M. 1.3: 8).

The mind-body of the empirical self is composed of the twenty-four *tattvas* or principles of *prakṛti* including psychic material and cosmic stuff[224] and freedom from embodiment connotes the withdrawl of *jīva* from the psycho-physical sphere of *avidyā-kāma-karma* and the cosmic spere of space-time. At the time of the dissolution of the physical body, which may happen at any time and in any manner, the released self withdraws from the gross to the subtle state and ascends to the absolute. The dissolution is not the destruction of the psychic make-up, but it is only a process of withdrawal and involution. Death to the wise man who knows Brahman is the re-entry of the self into the realm of the infinite. At that stage the *indriyas* enter into *manas* and *manas* into *prāṇa* and *prāṇa* is absorbed in the *jīva*; the self, with its homing instinct, sheds the body for ever and retires from functioning in the world of sense and understanding and returns to its centre which is the heart of Brahmapuri. It is at this stage there is the parting of the ways known as *arcirāti*[225] or the path of the gods and *dhūmāyana*[226] or the path of the smoke. The bound self that has not intuited Brahman follows the second path and decends into the wilderness of *samsāra* after a temporary enjoyment of pleasures of *pitṛloka* or the world of the manes and of *svarga*. But the wise man who has esoteric knowledge of Brahman prefers the first path and ascends into it. The *Brahmarandra*[227] is the gateway to God and is illumined by the indwelling self; the enlightened soul then finds the hole and soars gloriously to the world of eternal beauty by the radiant path of the gods. The released self realizes the unitive consciousness. The infinite of space-time, which staggers the scientific imagination, pales into infinitesmal littleness in the light of the infinite and the eternal glory of Paramapada which transcends the limits of thought. The wise man enjoys

---

224. T.V.M. 10.7: 10.

225. Restrictions about the place and time of death as recorded in M.Bh. Anusāsana, 220-31 do not apply to one who pursues this path.

226. Vide: *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* 4: 166 to 169.

227. It is an aperture on the top of the head of the human beings through which the self leaves the body on its way to *mokśa*.

all the perfections of Vaikuṇtha like *sōlokya* or identity of abode, *sāmīpya* or proximity, *sārūpya* or similarity of form and *sāyujya* or intimate union; he is ever immersed in the eternal bliss of Brahman. *Sōlōkya* (coexistence) leads to *sāmīpya* (fellowship) and *sārūpya* (transformation and deification) and is consummated in *sāyujya* (the bliss of communion).

The *mukta* is immersed in the supreme and unsurpassable bliss of *Brahmānubhava* without losing his self-being. It is a state of *sāyujya*, according to *Sūtra-kāra*, in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence.[228] *Brahmānanda* is the state of blessedness of the divine communion which 'passeth all understanding'. It is the *Brahmajñāni* alone that can give, from his experience, a definition of that exalted state which transcends the imperfect medium of thought and language.[229] In that state of *sāyujya* the soul-hunger of God and the God-hunger of the soul are satisfied, and the separate consciousness of both is swallowed up in the enjoyment of bliss. Expressing of this state, the *Upaniṣad* bursts into ecstasy: "I, who am food, eat the eater of food".[230] "As a man embraced by his beloved wife knows nothing that is without or within, even so the self when embraced by the All-knowing Self knows nothing without and nothing within".[231] Thus in *Brahmānanda* the experients exist, but their feeling of separateness melts away in the irresistibility of ecstasy. Even wisdom is, as it were, sweft away and sunk in rapture. In the rapt love of mystic union the *mukta* is mad with God and sings about His glory and goodness by chanting the songs of the *Sāma-veda*. The bliss of union is ever fecundative, and it enhances the value of the released state. The bliss of self-realizedness signifies the self that is realized and its value is eternally conserved".[232]

---

228. *V. Sūt.* 4.4: 21.
229. *T. itt. Ānand.* iv.
230. *Tait. up.* Bhrgu. 10
231. *Br. Up.* 4.3: 21. cf. This concept with the Tamil concept of '*Akapporuḷ*'.
232. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, pp, 491, 492.

The soul's ascent to the Absolute is beautifully described in the *Paramapada Sōpāna* by Vedānta Dēśika. The author indicates nine steps in the path to perfection. The first five viz., *vivēka, nirvēda, virakti, bhīti-bhāva* and *upāya* constitute the means and awaken the religious consciousness and induces the *mumukṣu* to practise devotion and self-surrender. The remaining four steps consisting of *utkramaṇa, arcirādi, divya dēśa prabhāva* and *prāpti* deal with the *summum bonum* of spiritual endeavour. They portray in a pictorial way the ascent of the redeemed soul to its home in the Absolute. The author follows the *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya* of Rāmānuja and the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* in his description. The soul soars on the two wings of freedom and wisdom along the solar path of *arcirādi*[233] and goes beyond the cosmic sphere of space-time consisting of seven spheres. There it is led by the ambassador of eternity; at last it enters the waters of immortality, or *Viraja* as it is called. This holy river marks the boundary line between the transcendental sphere of Brahman and the empirical sphere of *karma*. The soul then plunges spiritually into the Ocean Pacific, and frees itself from the contractions of *karma* in its dual aspect of *puṇya-papa* and the pairs of opposites. It then goes to the other shore, purified and perfected, like the stranded islander crossing the sea, and enters its own home in the country of the universal Soul where "the sun does not shine, nor the moon nor the stars; by His light everything is lighted".[234] When Brahman is intuited the fetters of the

---

233. It is *devayāna* or the path of gods. The Lord Himself helps the *mukta* to climb up by a ladder to Vaikuṇṭha through the sphere of the sun whose hot rays dispel the darkness and then removes the ladder (Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.9: 3). He leads the *mukta* with the following to guide him, namely *arcis* (fire), day, the bright half of the month, *Uttarāyaṇa*, and the year, Vāyu, Sun, Moon and Lightning, Varuṇa, Indra and Bramā. (Ch. Up 4.15: 5, 6; cf. ibid. 5.10: 1, 2 and also Br Up. 6.2: 15, 16). Mention about the route of the soul is found in the poem of Āḷvārs (vide Peri. Tm. 4.5: 10; P.TML. Kaṇ. 16, 17; C. TML. Kaṇ. 7, 8; Tc.V.67). It may be noted in this connection that the presiding deities (*abhimāni-devata*) of fire, day etc. are referred to as guides, since fire, day etc., are themselves inanimate.

234. Kath. Up. 5. 15.

heart are broken, [235] all doubts are solved and all *karma* is destroyed. As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean losing their name and form, a wise man freed from name and form, goes to the divine *Puruṣa* and becomes immortal.[236] The *Kauṣitaki Upaniṣad* portrays the ineffable ecstasy of attaining Brahmalōka or Vaikuṇṭha in the language of sense symbolism and artistic imagery.[237] The process of transfiguration is explained metaphorically as *Brahmālaṅkāra*, *Brahmagandha*, and *Brahmarasa*. The form, flavour, and fragrance of *Brahmānubhava* are not physical, or psychical, but are supersensuous (*aprākṛta*).

The redeemed self gloriously enters into Śrī Vaikuṇṭha which is the heart of Brahmalōka or Paramapada and its headquarters. This city is situated in the realm of eternal manifestation with twelve enclosures and surrounded by many gates and ramparts.[248] The soul then reaches the diving abode of *ānandamaya* or bliss and has a direct soul-sight of *Parañjyōti* or Supreme Light in a hall known as *mahāmaṇimaṇḍapam* constructed with thousands of pillars made of jewels. Brahman as infinite Beauty is seated on the throne known as *prajña* (wisdom) with its couch being placed on *Ananda* (Ādiśeṣa) and supported by *dharma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya* and *aiśvarya*. The soul is ever drawn by the beauty of Brahman and enjoys its bliss. The sense of dependance is revealed by the truth that *sarira* depends for its life on the *saririn* and serves as an instrument of His will. In the mystic sense, the self-feeling is swallowed up in the supra-personal experience of inseparability (*avibhāga*) of the bliss of Brahman. As the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* says, the *mukta* attains *āṭma-bhāva* like magnetised iron and is not identical with Brahman.[239] This concept of *mukti* is similar in all respects to that as defined in the *Gītā*.[240]

---

235. Mun. Up. 2.2: 8.
236. ibid. 3.2: 8.
337. Kaus. Up. 1 : 2 to 5.
238. Yat. Dip. VI. 11.
239. V.P. 6.7 : 30.
240. Bh. G. 14 : 2. cf. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". *Mathew* V. 48.

The departed soul reaches Brahman according to many *Upaniṣads*, and contin es to exist as a separate entity and enjoys personal immortality.[241] The cosmic gods like Agni, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Indra and Brahmā greet the soul as a rare spiritual victor which has regained its spirituality by subduing worldliness. The spiritual ascent is facilitated by the help of a trans-human person known as *amānava puruṣa* who is really the ambassador of the Absolute.[242] The Āḷvār says: "with these guides who are immortal, the soul reaches Vaikuṇṭha and casts off this beautiful prison-house of *samsāra*"[243] The *mukta* can apprehend Brahman with the divine eye, comprehend His nature and have an integral experience of the Absolute He is led from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. The *mukta*, with the expansive consciousness of *dharmabhūta-jñāna*, realises the unitive state. He overcomes the moral distinction of *puṇya-pāpa* and realizes all his desires. His self-feeling melts away at the sight of the bewitching beauty of Brahman and his *Vedāntic* thought expires in the ecstasy of mystic union. In true *mukti*, the eternal transcends the temporal, and it is only in the world of Brahman transcending the phenomenal world that the *jiva* is transformed or brahmanised and enjoys eternal life. In this state, the *mukta* is free from sin, old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst, and the taint of error, evil, ugliness and other imperfections. He enjoys the perfections of Brahman with Brahman and enjoys everything everywhere by his mere will without any external aid or constraint. He wills the true and the good and every conation of his is immediately fulfilled. He is no longer subject to *Vedic* and *Vedāntic* imperatives and injunctions and other external determinations. He has cosmic freedom to move in

---

241. The poems of Āḷvārs too agree to this view which can be seen in the last verses of their hymns (vide: TVM 5.1 : 11; 6.5 : 11; 10.3 : 11; Peri. Tm. 8.1 : 10; 8.5 : 10; 8.6 : 10, 8.10 : 10; 9.2 : 10; 9.10 : 10 etc., Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.2 : 21; 1.8 : 11; 2.1 : 10; 3 4 : 10; 3.5 : 11; 3 10 : 10; 4.6 : 10; 4.9 : 11; 5.1 : 10; Nāc. Tm. 2 : 10; 3 : 10; 9 : 10; 12 : 10. Perum. Tm. 1 : 11; 7 : 11; 10 : 11.

242. Ch. Up. 5.10 : 2.

243. T.V.M. 1.3 : 11.

both *līlā-vibhūti* and *nitya-vibhūti*, and can even meet departed loved ones, as in the dream life, which is here taken as a foretaste of the world of Brahman.[244] His all-pervasive consciousness destroys the barriers of distance and time and so he lives in spaceless space and timeless time. The mortal becomes immortal and the self regains its eternity as it were. Self-illumination in the state brings out the infinite intelligence and omniscience of the finite self. Its *viśiṣṭa aikya* is then apprehended in non-difference from Brahman. Prahlāda describes in his ecstasy the onset of cosmic consciousness and brings out this state: "As the infinite is all-pervading, He is myself, all things proceed from me, I am all things, all things are in me who am eternal".[245] So it is clear that the *ātman* is non-different from the Supreme Self by attaining the being of its being. Nammāḻvār also affirms the truth of this cosmic experience. In the excess of his love, the Āḻvār, in the guise of a bride, imitates and mirrors forth the glory of God and claims the two *vibhūtis* of the cosmic and ultra-cosmic functions as his own. The saint feels that he owns the infinite when he has a soul sight of "that divine thread which holds the whole congeries of things". Thus the *mukta* with his all-inclusive cosmic consciousness, views himself and the cosmos with the eye of Brahman. He experiences his *aham* as the *prakāra* or mode of Brahman and his *jñāna* mirrors forth the whole universe and he realises his oneness with Brahman.

Nammāḻvār gives a graphic description of his proceeding to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. This is the result of his intuiting his departure from the world.[246] The Āḻvār is able to visualise the experience in anticipation, and to live in his imagination the experience, in vivid detail and in the graphic present, of the great welcome that will be accorded to him in Heaven as he enters it. Nature celebrates the occasion by wearing a festive garb; and the entire cosmos rejoices. The elements

---

244. Br. Up. 8.1: 5.
245. V.P. 1.19: 85; cf. T.V.M. 5.6.
246. Pillān on T.V.M. 10.9: 1.

themselves such as the clouds and the ocean signify welcome to him. All the clouds roar giving peals of thunder resembling the sound of the tabors announcing the auspicious occasion; all the seas dance in ecstasy at the emancipation of the soul of the Āḷvār.[247] The *ṛṣis* and the gods welcome and show him the way standing in rows in the sky.[248] The *kiṉṉaras* and others sing and offer all honours; the celestial damsels sing the praises of the Āḷvār.[249] The *Māruts* and the *Vasus* accompany him to regions beyond theirs and extol him.[250] All of them take him to the limits of the material world.[251] On the borders of the Eternal realms, the Eternals bid him welcome and wash his feet with the ladies of moon-like faces offering him, jars filled with holy waters (*pūrṇa-kumpam*), treasures, fragrant powders and auspicious lamps.[252] Then he lives for ever with the Eternals enjoying eternal bliss.

---

247. T.V.M. 10.9: 1, 2.
248. ibid. 10.9 : 3, 4.
249. ibid. 10.9 : 5, 6.
250. ibid. 10.9 : 7.
551. ibid. 10.9 : 8.
252. ibid. 10.9 : 9, 10.

CONTRIBUTION OF ĀḶVĀRS OTHER THAN NAMMĀḶVĀR

The sum and substance of the teachings that could be gathered from the compositions of the other Āḷvārs is similar to what Nammāḷvār contributed. Yet, there is something unique and individual in their contributions. The other Āḷvārs tried their hands at handling several forms of compositions (*tours de force*) and several motifs. Among the Āḷvārs Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār was the most learned and even in his own lifetime he was recognised as a great poet[1] and had tried his hands in various literary forms and variety of metres in his compositions and at the same time had exhibited the highest degree of devotion to the Lord in all his works.

THE FIRST ĀḶVĀRS

Poykaiyāḷvār, Pūtattāḷvār and Peyāḷvār form the first and earliest group to visualize the Lord with Śrī at Tirukkōvalūr and refer to Him as the deity.[2] The supremacy of Viṣṇu over other deities and in particular over Śiva's is vividly brought out.[3] It is Poykaiyāḷvār that made the unique pronoucement that the Lord would take that form which His disciples desire Him to take up and appear before them. He takes also that name which His devotees wish Him to take up.[4] He brought out vididly the concept of *śeṣa* by describing the manifold services which Ādiśeṣa renders to the Lord.[5] These Āḷvārs enjoin the utterance of the

1. Peri. Tm. 1.7 : 10.
2. M. Tv. 67, 86; cf. I. Tv. 52, 57, 82; Mū. Tv. 1, 2, 16.
3. ibid. 5, 74, 98.
4. ibid. 44.
5. ibid. 53.

name of the Lord as soon as one gets from his bed in the early hours of the morning before sun rise.[6] Pūtattāḷvār admires and loses himself in admiring the affection which Yaśoda displayed by making Kṛṣṇa suck her breast soon after Pūtaṇa was killed. She did not in the least worry as to what would happen to her, if she too were to meet with her end. She wanted to see that the child must be fed with breast milk which she offered with affection.[7] The substance of the teachings of the *Vedas* consists in hailing His name.[8]

All the three Āḷvārs speak of the Lord as having the world as His body,[9] but Pēyāḷvār in particular offers graphic exposition of this truth.[10] Worship with flowers at the proper time is to be done at His Feet.[11] Mere recitation of the *mantras* while doing *sandhyā* does not serve any purpose, if there is no bestowal of any thought on the greatness of God, that is, if there is no devotion to the Lord.[12] The three Āḷvārs who must have practised meditation for God-realization as it is evident from the stress they lay on the need to control the sense,[13] had a direct vision of the Lord and His shining frame.[14] They chose to dedicate at His Feet their compositions which contain the outpourings of their hearts brimming with love.[15] All of them were attached by the Tirumalai hills[16] and the deity there.[17] Ardent devotees meditate on the deity in the hill remaining motionless, not even exhaling. Creepers with flowers grow over their matted

6. ibid. 66; I. Tv. 47.
7. I. Tv. 9; Mū. Tv. 29.
8. ibid. 39.
9. M.Tv. 29, 73, 92; Mu. Tv. 24.
10. Mū. Tv. 24; 38, 44.
11. M. Tv. 43; 1. Tv. 76, 77; Mū. Tv. 24, 44.
12. ibid. 33.
13. ibid. 47, 50; I. Tv. 6, 26; Mū. Tv. 12.
14. I. Tv. 11, 51, 56; Mū. Tv. 2, 5, 50, 55, 57.
15. M. Tv. 1; I. Tv. 74.
16. ibid. 26, 37 to 40, 76; I. Tv. 25, 46, 54; Mū. Tv. 26, 30.
17. ibid. 68; 1. Tv. 28, 45; Mū. Tv. 14, 40, 70.

hairs.[18] Elephants, monkeys, and others also worship the Lord Who is described as shining like a gem.[19] Pēyāḷvār refers to the specific characteristics of Viṣṇu and Śiva and states that the forms of both synchronize in the Lord at the Tirupati hills.[20] This is not an indication as some hold[21] as suggestive of the identity of the deity in the hills with Śiva. The Āḷvārs emphatically declare that Lord Nārāyaṇa has allowed Śiva to dwell in the left part of His body.[22] It may be that Śiva's presence is not noticeable in every form of the Lord. Whenever the Lord's place is mentioned as hill, it must refer only to Tirumalai[23] and not to any other place.

The first three Āḷvārs had a synthetic view of the various forms of the Supreme Person. Often they identified the Lord Who lies in the milky ocean with the *arcā* and *vibhava* forms and with the indweller of the selves. Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Tiruvehkā and others get frequent reference in this context.[24] The standing, reclining and sitting potures of the Supreme Person in the *arcā* forms are graphically connected with His other forms such as Vāmana, Varāha, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.[25] It seems as though that He chose to lie down after achieving some exploits.[26] His omnipresent form[27] and His presence as the indweller[28] are never lost sight of. These three Āḷvārs do not however lay exclusive emphasis on the significance of worshipping the deity in one form alone. Besides declaring that His form cannot be

---

18. I. Tv. 53.
19. ibid. 72; Mu. Tv. 70.
20. Mu. Tv. 63.
21. *Ārāiccit-tokuti*, pp.271, 272.
22. M. Tv. 28; T N. 9; Peri. Tm. 7.10: 3; T.V.M. 1.3: 9; 10.4: 6.
23. Mū. Tv. 69.
24. M. Tv. 39, 77, 99; I. Tv. 25, 28, 46, 54, 70; Mū. Tv. 26, 30, 32. 34.
25. ibid. 39, 77, 99; I. Tv. 18, 34; Mū, Tv. 94.
26. Mū. Tv. 64; cf. Nāṉ. Tv. 35.
27. M. Tv. 94, 96; Mū. Tv. 37.
28. ibid. 99; Mū. Tv. 3.

apprehended to be of any particular kind only,[29] it is agreed that He presents Himself in a visible and enchanting frame.

Devotion to God is technically called *para-bhakti* in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school as it is directed towards the Supreme Person. *Para-bhakti* creates in the devotee an ardent desire to have a direct vision of the Lord which is called *para-jñāna*. The high delight arising out of this *para-jñāna* is called *parama-bhakti.* All the first three Āḷvārs have all these to almost the same degree among them, but because of their different approaches and mental aptitudes, their compositions reveal that one of these is the prominent aspect in the work of one of them while another in others' works *Para-bhakti* dominates the composition of Poykaiyāḷvār, *para-jñāna* that of Pūtattāḷvār and *parama-bhakti* that of Pēyāḷvār.[30] All the three Āḷvārs speak only of worshipping the Feet of the Lord and do not conceive of any other means such as knowldge or good works as the way for obtaining release.

Poykaiyāḷvār begins his composition by referring to the need for the removal of worldly distress and completes his work by asking his mind to set itself to the Lord. Pūtattāḷvār refers in his first verse and the last one to his devotion to the Lord. Pēyāḷvār refers to his great rejoicing at the sight of the Lord with Śrī in the first verse and to the Grace of Śrī in the last one. From this, one thing is clear and that is, the first three Āḷvārs were so much satisfied with *para-bhakti* that they were not much worried about the miseries of the world. They were already *parama-bhaktas* of the Lord before they met together at Tirukkōvalūr when they had *para-jñāna.* Naturally, they were more concerned with obtaining a direct vision of the Lord which made them, while they got it, *parama-bhaktas*. It is clear that the goal of all these three ways of knowing is one only, which is confirmed by tradition also. The path of knowledge, the path of devotion saturated with knowledge and the path of vision

---

29 ibid. 56, 68, 84; I. Tv. 5, 60; Mū. Tv. 81, 82.

30. *Tivyārtta-tīpikai* - Second Tiruvantāti (Introduction).

(intuitive realization) are not three separate ways They form one unitary manner of progressive realization. Knowledge passes over transcendent devotion, which in its turn culminates in vision of the Divine form and attributes. Though the ways of approach are triple, the object of all the three is one only, namely, the integral experience of God.

TIRUMAḶICAIYĀḶVĀR

Tirumḷicaiyāḷvār is the most erudite and philosophical-minded among the Āḷvārs. Intense meditation on the nature of Reality made him realize the truth about God-head. He moved among the exponents of the various schools of religion and philosophy and made himself familiar with their doctrines. He adopted the powers of ratiocination and arrived at the conclusion that the Lord with Śri is the supreme God. He presented his views in his two compositions *Nāṉmukaṉ-tiruvantāti* and *Tiruccanta-viruttam.*

In the very opening verse of the *Nāṉmukaṉ-tiruvantāti*, he mentions that Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Person who created Brahmā with four faces who in his turn produced Rudra[31]. Due reflection on the nature of the Supreme God-head would only prove that Nārāyaṇa is the only deity whose greatness is not fully known to any one and it is only His Grace that confers the result on men for their undertakings.[32] This Āḷvār states that none but he has realised the ultimate truth as reclining in the milky ocean, Śrī Raṅgam and the banyan leaf, revealing the self-confidence he has for such a realization and the successful efforts he has made to realise this.[33] That Nārāyaṇa is the only deity who is devoted by all expressions is the doctrine of the Viśiṣṭādvatic school which was enunciated by this Āḷvār.[34] Perhaps the period when this Āḷvār was living was marked by the aggressive preachings of the

---

31. Nāṉ. Tv. 1.
32. ibid. 2; cf. for a similar idea: Tyāgarāja's kṛti - 'Ēmicēsitenemi Śrīrāmasvāmi karuṇā' in Tōḍi rāga.
33. ibid. 3, 10, 27, 73.
34. ibid. 4.

Jains, Buddhists and Śaivites when the adherents of these faiths chose to assert their individual worth by casting disparaging comments on one another. This is reflected to some extent in some verses of this Āḻvār where he emphatically declares that the followers of other religions do not extol Viṣṇu and for that reason are insignificant and mean.[35] In particular, the several incidents are enumerated to prove that Śiva is definitely inferior to Viṣṇu[36], Nārāyaṇa is ever ready to bestow His Grace on humanity and delay in getting His Grace is due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of men in making request for His Grace.[37] He stands as the very essence of the *Vedas*.[38] Those who take to education through the study of the *Vedas* should be deemed to have failed to get the benefit of that education, if they have not realized that Nārāyaṇa is the supreme deity.[39] Śiva is described to be seated under the banyan tree and taught his four pupils that the Supreme Being is the One Who measured the world, lies on the banyan leaf and milky ocean and that all shall bend before Him and worship Him.[40] No other deity but Him Who has Śrī deserves worship.[41] Nārāyaṇa is everything in the world and nothing exists besides Him.[42] The Āḻvār refers to the festival celebrated at Tirumalai on the day when the constellation Tiruvōṇam dominates.[43] Eevery deity including Brahmā and Rudra propitiate the God at Tirumalai[44]. It is this Āḻvār that declared openly and emphati-

35. ibid. 6, 14, 52.
36. ibid. 8, 9, 19, 31, 56, 78; Tc. V. 70, 71.
37. ibid. 7.
38. ibid. 13, 69.
39. ibid. 54.
40. ibid. 17, 26. This is suggested by a verse which describes Śiva as a great devotee of Viṣṇu, with rosary garland in the hand, the ultimate truth of Rāma in the heart, the water from the Feet of Viṣṇu on the head and the supreme Rāma *mantra* at the tip of the tongue.
41. ibid. 53.
42. ibid. 20.
43. ibid. 41.
44. ibid. 42., 43.

cally the Tirumalai hills as the place liked and respected by the denizens of heaven and earth.[45] The glory of this hill is described in several ways.[46] The deity at Śrī Raṅgam shows to humanity that He presents to people Himself out of His own free will and not in the least through the efforts on the part of the people to get at Him.[47] The ascetics with the triple staff (*tridaṇḍa)* are said to live there.[48] One shall utter His name, or any verse or composition in praise of Him.[49] His devotees shall be worshipped[50] and they are respected by Brahmā and others.[51]

The other work *Tiruccanta-viruttam* is a polemical treatise, as it were The Āḷvār revels in using numbers symbolic of the *tattvas* he would like to demonstrate as suggestive of Nārāyaṇa's greatness. Number five is used in all possible ways to show the products of matter, senses, elements and that the Lord is the only one God having control over them.[52] He is the Lord of the syllables and letters which are in the form of consonants and vowels and He is shown to the world in the *praṇava*.[53] He is the soul of all beings[54]. He is worshipped by Śiva.[55] He is the material cause of the world which springs from Him and merges in Him like the waves of the sea ebb and get merged there itself.[56] The *Upaniṣadic* statement that He is beyond expression, but yet the subject of them is beautifully restated by

45. ibid. 45.
46. ibid. 46, 47, 48.
47. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai cites this as an illustration of the *mantra* contained in Kaṭh. Up. 2: 23.
48. Tc. V. 52.
49. Nāṉ. Tv. 65, 88.
50. ibid. 89, 90.
51. ibid. 91.
52. Tc. V. 3.
53. ibid. 4.
54. ibid. 5.
55 ibid. 9.
56. ibid. 10.

the Āḷvār.[57] His real nature is beyond human comprehension, but He is too well known as the Lord of Nappiṉṉai.[58] Though He could not be named specifically in any particular way, He is having the discus in the hand and is glorified in the *Sāma-veda*, that is, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.[59] He is to be known through the four *Vedas* and six auxiliaries.[60] ' It is only this Āḷvār that expounds the *vyūha* doctrine of the *Pāñcarātra* system.

> Ēkamūrtti mūṉṟumūrtti nālumūrtti naṉmaicēr
> Pōkamūrtti puṇṇiyattiṉ mūrttieṇṇil mūrttiyāy
> Nākamūrtti cayaṉamāy nalaṅkaṭar kiṭantumēl
> Ākamūrtti āyavaṇṇam eṉkol āti tēvaṉē ".[61]

In this verse '*Ēkamūrtti*' means one person who is Para-vāsudeva. '*Mūṉṟumūrtti*' signifies Saṅkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha and Pradhyumna who are cosmic deities incarnated by the Divine. '*Nālumūrtti*' means Pradhāna, Puruṣa, Avyakta and Kāla forms; '*Pōkamūrtti*' (*bhogamūrtti*) means Enjoyable Being otherwise known as immaterial form. '*Puṇṇiyamūrtti*' stands for the Person realised through merit or the form realized in liberation. '*Eṇṇ:lmūrtti*' signifies the person of many manifestational forms or *vibhava* forms. '*Ākamūrtti*' (*Yākamūrtti*) means many forms of *arcā* desired by the devotees.' The Lord is responsible for orderliness in any aspect of life such as sex, gender in grammar, matter etc.[62] This Āḷvār refers profusely to the divine descents of the Lord, but makes individual references to the exploits of the Lord as Kṛṣṇa.[63] Following the *Bhāgavata*, the Āḷvār refers to the colour of the Lord as white, red, dark and blue in the *Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* ages respectively.[64] His synthetic presentation of the Lord's forms is marvellous when he

57. ibid. 11.
58. ibid. 13.
59. ibid. 14; Ch. Up. 1.6 : 6.
60. ibid. 15.
61. ibid. 17.
62. ibid. 26.
63. ibid. 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 43, 58, 107.
64. ibid. 44.

mentions the Lord as standing on the hill (Tirumalai), lying in the milky ocean, measuring the worlds, keeping the worlds within Him at the time of deluge, lifted the world as Varāha and created the beings and gods. He is thus the primeval Lord [65] He refers to the incident of Rāma aiming the earthen clod in the bow and striking at the hump-backed Mantara and made her relieved of her egoism.[66]

Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakonam) is described to be a place inhabited by brahmins wearing the sacred threads, constantly reciting the *Vedas*.[67] The Lord who stands at Tiruveṅkaṭam where the rich bamboos reach the skies is lying at Kumbakonam rich in plantations brimming with honey.[68] The Āḷvār asks the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai whether He is lying there due to the legs aching when He walked through the forests in the descent of Rāma or because of the bodily ache when He lifted up the earth in His Varāha descent. He asks Him to get up and talk to him.[69] It is held that the Lord got up slightly from the serpent couch and continued to remain in that posture. Frequent references are made to the various postures with which the Lord presents in the various shrines [70]

The means that could be adopted to get at Him lies in weaning of the mind from the objects of the world and then enter into meditation which is only *karma-yoga*. The sins could be got rid of and then it will be possible to reflect on His qualities.[71] The repetition of the eight-lettered *mantra* is necessary to have spiritual progress.[72]

Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār is rightly called Bhakti-sāra and *para-bhakti* is meant here.[73] *His Nāṉmukaṉ tiruvantāti* declares

65. ibid. 48.
66. ibid. 49.
67. ibid. 56.
68. ibid. 60.
69. ibid. 61.
70. ibid. 63, 64, 65.
71. ibid. 75, 76.
72. ibid. 77; cf. ibid. 78. vide ibid. 67 for *arcirāti-gati.*

that Nārāyaṇa is the subject matter of all the *Vedas*. After the manner of the *Upaniṣads* this Āḷvār takes up the Lord as the cause of the world and concludes that He is the only God to be worshipped. The other work *Tiruccanta-viruttam* deals mostly with the relation of body and soul as existing between the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things, and God. The composition is called poetry or song[74] because of the metrical mode as distinct from other ordinary modes. He is rightly called '*cōti*'[75] as he was like a lustrous lamp throwing a flood of light on the surrounding objects. Through his works he brought to light many of the truths of Vaiṣṇavite religion.

TOṆṬARAṬIP - POṬIYĀḶVĀR

The small poem *Tiruppaḷḷi-ēḻucci* of this Āḷvār is a fine lyrical piece which is intended to awaken the Lord in the early hours of the morning. This piece is a perfect artistic production of poetic beauty describing that the day has dawned which is graphically represented to come into being step by step each indicated by the results produced. Darkness recedes,[76] gentle wind blows[77] and the stars gradually fade.[78] Chirping of the birds is heard.[79] God Who is the protector of people from their distresses[80] is frequently mentioned to be awaited. He is awakened by all sorts of deities,[81] sages, semi-divine beings who throng at His doors and compete with each other to have precadence over others. They all sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments.[82]

---

73. T.P. 371 where the Āḷāvr is referred to as '*paraṉ*'.
74. ibid. 371. Here the composition is referred to as '*canta viruttap-pāṭal*'.
75. ibid. 40.
76. T.E. 1.
77. ibid. 2
78. ibid. 3.
79. ibid. 4, 5.
80. ibid. 2.
81. ibid. 6, 7, 8, 9.
82. ibid. 9.

The Āḻvār preferred to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam, a place where Vibhīṣṇa offered his worship.[83] While Viśvāmitra, who initiated the service of arousing the Lord, requested Rāma to get up[84] to attend to daily routine, this Āḻvār requests the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam to get up in order to make him become the servant of His devotees.[85] This important aspect of this piece has permeated the practice of the Vaiṣṇavites to make the recitation of this piece obligatory during the *Dhanurmāsa* (December-January).

Tirumālai is the other work of this Āḻvār in forty-five verses. The Āḻvār rendered service to the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by rearing a garden of flowering creepers and trees and wreathing the flowers into garlands for the Lord. This service was considered great by him and so named this composition as *Tirumālai* (sacred garland) each verse being considered as a flower. The Āḻvār does not actually claim his verses to be treated as conforming to eight kinds of flowers *(aṣṭapuṣpikā)* but it is not difficult to find references to some of those flowers. Sense control shall form part of the discipline to prepare oneself for serving God.[86] Deep remorse is conveyed by the Āḻvār for not having controlled his senses and for having allowed himself to be lured by women's enticing tricks.[87] The Āḻvār is bent more on advising people to utter the name of God by citing his own painful experiences and as such this composition could be justifiably named *Tirumālai*. Two festivals mark out this composition as unique by the stress laid on the value of uttering God's name.[88] It is devotion that marks out a devotee and not his nobility due to birth or social status.[89] The words '*accutā*', '*amararērē*' '*āyartam koḻuntē*' are enumerated with significance suggesting respectively that 'the Lord would never let down His devotees', 'is

83. ibid. 5.
84. Rām. Bāla. 23: 2.
85. T.E. 10.
86. T.M. 1; cf. ibid. 21, 30.
87. ibid. 31, 33.
88. ibid. 1, 41.
89. ibid. 39, 40.

the Lord of the great gods', and is 'the darling of the cow-herds.'[90] God is thus within the reach of people whether they are high or low.[91] The enjoyable experience which this Āḷvār got through reciting the names of the Lord make him not to wish for even the position of Indra.[92] The Āḷvār's advice to people is rich with his insight into the worldly behaviour.[93] It is enough if one utters the three-lettered name when one is in distress.[94] One would be rid of his sins by simply listening to the casual utterance of the Lord's name.[95] Simply uttering the word *araṅkam* would protect people from distress.[96]

The recounting of the Āḷvār's personal experience with women and how the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam lifted him up from distress is full of feeling.[97] The Lord is true to those who are true to Him [98] The Lord entered within him and instilled respectful consideration for him.[99] He became delectable to him who would not bow to Him or praise Him.[100] The sight of the Lord is so endearing that tears gush forth from his eyes and prevent them from getting fixed at Him [101] Merely talking and talking does not confer any benefit or greatness on the speaker. Words would fail only when the mind, which is pure, is directed at the Lord Whom it cannot gauge. The

---

90. ibid. 2.
91. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai on ibid. 2.
92. T.M. 2.
93. ibid. 4 to 14.
94. ibid. 4. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai takes the Sanskrit name 'Govinda' here and draws the anylogy by uttering the Tamil word (amma) which is three-lettered and uttered when one is in difficulties.
95. ibid. 12.
96. It is this aspect of the utterance of the name that is in vogue among Vaiṣṇavites in uttering the word '*raṅga*' when sneezing.
97. T.M. 16 to 24.
98. ibid. 15.
99. ibid. 16.
100. ibid. 17
101. ibid. 18.

mind is asked to tell him whether it is not a fact.[102] The charming appearance of the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam is so ravishing that the Āḷvār could not forget it at all.[103] The Āḷvār appeals for God's mercy, as he is fully incompetent for adopting any other means such as worshipping fire, *bhakti* or *jñāna*.[104] His remorse at his past misdeeds is such that he feels that he did not do that amount of service which a squirrel did for Rāma at the time of building of a bridge to Laṅka by the monkeys,[105] and this is interpreted by the Āḷvār as service rendered after taking bath in the sea water. His appeal to God is really pathetic as conveyed in the passage: "I do not own any landed property or have any one whom I could claim as my relation. Therefore I hold on Your Feet. O, Supreme Lord! O, Lord of the hue of the cloud! Lord of enchanting eyes! I am crying in distress. Who is there for me as saviour? O Lord of Tiruvaraṅkam!"[106] He had come to the Lord after wasting the life in debauchery and women.[107] He was leading the life of a holy person without the mental purity required for it.[108] That he alone would decide whom He would favour is clear from His readiness to save the elephant from distress and making Brahmā and Śiva to wait for a long time to earn His favour.[109] Another striking feature in the work of this

---

102. ibid. 22. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai goes a step further and asks the the tongue which is fickle in incoherent talk to tell him whether this is a fact. (Vide: His commentary on ibid. 22. cf. *Jagannātha Pāṇḍita: Bhāmini Vilāsa.* 4:10.

103. ibid. 23. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai in his commentary on this verse remarks that some would retain their charm only in one posture, namely, standing. When they lie down, they would appear detestable. The Lord is of enchanting appearance even or perhaps more in his recling posture at Śrī Raṅgam.

104. ibid. 25 to 34.

105. ibid. 27.

106. ibid. 29; cf. ibid. 30, 31.

107. ibid. 33. According to Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai this is like entering the house through the back-door.

108. ibid. 34.

109. ibid. 44.

Āḷvār lies in his abiding devotion to the *bhāgavatas* whose worth lies in their faith to the Lord and not in their birth.[110]

The Āḷvār claims for himself the appellation '*Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi*', that is, the dust clinging to the feet of those who do service (*toṇṭar*) to the Lord.[141] It is clear from this that he is not enamoured of the devotion of some elevated souls, as that is beyond the reach of most men. In this respect, this Āḷvār has made an improvement over the generally accepted concept that a devotee shall choose to be the servant of the devotees at the eighth stage in the downward step.[112]

On a perusal of the two works of this Āḷvār it will be known that the saint knew only the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam and he celebrated only Him and none else. The Vaiṣṇavite *ācāryas* hold that the *Tirumālai* is the *Viṣṇudharma-sāra* and the greatness of this work is to be understood from the Tamil proverb "He who does not know *Tirumālai* cannot apprehend Perumāḷ".

KULACĒKARĀḶVĀR

The greatness of this Āḷvār lies in his passionate longing to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by beholding Him,[113] sing His praise,[114] offer flowers at His Feet,[115] fold the palms,[116] bend before Him,[117] have his heart firm with ecstasy[118] and to roll down on the ground in great delight.[119] He is keen in

---

110. ibid. 42, 43. According to Periyavāceāṉ Piḷḷai a *prapanna* must avoid worshipping a deity other thin Viṣṇu and offending a *bhāgavata*.
111. ibid. 45.
112. Pallāṇṭu. 6, cf. Perum; Tm. 3. 6.
113. Perum. Tm. 1: 1,7.
114. ibid. 1: 2.
115. ibid. 1: 3.
116. ibid. 1: 4.
117. ibid 1:5.
118 ibid. 1: 6.
119. ibid. 1: 9 cf, *Tēvāram* 1. 40: 1 to 9.

having the company of *bhāgavatas* while worshipping the deity.[220] To see such persons is itself a fortune and to dance with them as they utter the name '*aranka*' is a great treat.[121] The mind of this Āḷvār is entertaining intense affection to think of them [122] The Āḷvār does not like to be in the company of people who are interested only in food, clothing and material attractions.[123] Rebirth is not desired at all, but if it should be, the Āḷvār likes to be reborn in the Tirumalai hills in any capacity like a fish[124] or bird[125] in the tank there or a pillar[126] or step[127] or anything[128] so that he would not lose the vicinity of God. Whatever be the severity of his sufferings, he could not have the protection of any but the Lord. The analogies that are drawn to illustrate this aspect are unique and arresting.[129] To cite an illustration, a chaste woman, even if she is despised by her husband to the utter disgrace of the onlookers around her, would not care for any one but her husband for seeking protection.[130] All the verses in this decad are addressed to the Lord at Vittuvakkōṭu.

The intense longing of this saint to have direct vision of the Lord and his inability to wait for the time when he could have his mental state turned into that of a bride complaining that her spouse did not keep to the tryst and therefore remonstrating with him for it and asking him to get away from her.[131] The whole decad takes the form of reaction on the cowherdesses by Kṛṣṇa's delaying tactics to meet them at the time already fixed. The Āḷvār depicts

120. ibid. 1: 10.
121. ibid. 2: 1, 2.
122. ibid. 2: 1, 4, 7, 8.
123. ibid. 3: 4, 5.
124 ibid, 4: 2.
125. ibid. 4: 1.
126. ibid. 4: 5.
127. ibid. 4: 9
128. ibid. 4: 10.
129. ibid. 5.
130. ibid. 5: 2.
131. ibid. 6.

vividly how a cowherdess had to give some kind of different excuses to each one of her friends for her leaving them to have a clandestine meeting with Kṛṣṇa.[132] The Lord is taken to task for having enjoyed the company of her female messenger whom the *gopī* sent to Him with an errand.[133] She had seen Him proceed in front of her house in disguise in the company of some other woman making some gestures on the way.[134] His deceitful utterances and behaviour are not unknown to her.[135] He is really a hypocrite for His enjoying the company of another woman in her vicinity while she was called by Him to wait for Him there.[136] This decad which the Āḷvār meant for singing is unmatched for the lyrical elegance[137] it displays and for the effective rebuke which the beloved casts on the fugitive Lord Whose playing on the flute influenced them with mellifluous notes.[138] It is doubtful whether this representation of the woman's disappointment could be better presented by a woman composer.

The intense religious experience does not leave the mental states of the devotee, but lie still and undisturbed. Age-long experiences impress the self with residues of manifold nature, which are aroused by external factors. Besides the longing which a woman gets aroused for the physical union with her lover, there are other attitudes when a self could be made to display under the stress of deep experience. The self could imagine to be the mother fondling her child. The keen disappointment which the Āḷvār feels for not being able to get the vision of the Lord is represented by Devaki's motherly feeling that the child which was born of her could not be tended by her. She feels that she is the worst among the mothers to leave her child to the care of another

---

132. ibid. 6: 3.
133. ibid. 6: 4.
134. ibid. 6:5.
135. ibid., 6: 6, 7.
136. ibid., 6: 8.
137. ibid., 6: 10.
138. ibid., 6:9; cf. Bhāg. P.10.21.

woman.[139] She feels that the delight which Yaśoda and Nandagopa were having in the company of Kṛṣṇa is not to be had by her and Vāsudeva.[140] The tender and charming limbs of the child and his sweet utterances are enjoyed by Yaśoda who is therefore held to have become divine.[141] She could not behold the child crawling in all forms and postures[142] or suck her breasts.[143] Yośoda and not she is lucky to see the child take the butter and to behold when it cries.[144] She could not be a witness of the Lord lifting the Govardhana hill or indulge in *kuravaikkūttu* and *kuṭakkūttu* or slay the demon by throwing him at the tree or dance on the hoods of Kāḷiyaṉ.[145] These descriptions are in fact the presentations, in disguise, of the Āḷvār's fancy at his inability to have such of those visions of the incidents of child Kṛṣṇa, but the disguise is richer for presentation, as Devaki's emotion is more natural and is full of sympathetic appeal. It is the result of her feeling for her unfortunate lot that she is to be away from her child whose exploits she could only listen when narrated.

The Āḷvār presents a fine lullaby addressed to Rāma as a child put in a swing and the deity is enshrined in Kaṇapuram (Tirukkaṇṇapuram).[146] The intense separation from the Lord is well depicted through Dasaratha's lamentation at Rāma's proceeding to the forest. The representation is very well conceived and the pathetic feeling is much heightened by Dasaratha asking Sumantra and Vaśiṣṭha whether Rāma's proceeding to the forest was justified on any ground and referring to the happy lot of Kaikēyi.[147] The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is recounted admirably in a decad which refers to the Citrakūṭam where three thousand brahmins praise the Lord

139. ibid. 7: 1.
140. ibid. 7: 2, 3.
141. ibid. 7: 4, 5.
142. ibid. 7: 6, 7.
143. ibid. 7: 7.
144. ibid. 7: 8.
145. ibid. 7: 9.
146. ibid. 8.
147. ibid. 9

and to which place he is keen on proceeding.[148] Agastya is referred to as the great Tamil sage. The story of Uttara-kāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* forms the continuous narration of the epic story.[149] The Lord at Śrī Raṅgam is bowed to and is said to be extolled in hymns composed both in Tamil and Sanskrit.[150] *Kaiṅkarya*[151] to the Lord is what the Āḻvār yearns to have and not lordship over the world.[152] Enjoyment of life of the material kind is to be shunned.[153]

TIRUPPĀṆĀḺVĀR

Amalaṉāt'piṟāṉ the only poem of Tiruppāṇāḻvār is unique in several respects. Firstly, it does not contain any reference to the feeling of separation and sending of message as in the compositions of Nammāḻvār and others or advice to others or refutation of other schools of thought as found in the works of Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār or Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. It is pregnant with the intense religious feeling of devotion which the Āḻvār had for the Lord. Secondly, it contains ten verses all of which are devoted to the description of the Lord at Śrī-Raṅgam from foot to head (*pādādikēśa*) perhaps after the manner of Sanskrit compositions. Thirdly, there is a synthetic treatment of all the forms of the Lord, particularly those of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Vamāna and the deity at Tirumalai and Tiruvaraṅkam.

This poem contains the essence of the teachings of the various passages of the *Vedas*[154] such as *Antarāditya Vidyā Īśavāsyopaniṣad* and *Puruṣa-sūkta* and showing them to consist in the auspicious figure of the Lord. This gains more relevance and significance because the auspicious form of the Lord is required both when the self adores the Lord here and when it gets at Him in the state of release.

---

148. ibid. 10.
149. ibid. 10: 8, 9, 10.
150. ibid. 1: 4.
151. ibid. 4: 1.
152. ibid. 4: 2, 5, 9.
153. ibid. 4: 6.
154. T.P. 378; cf. "Paḷamaṟaiyiṉ poruḷāl"

The Divine is above all as the supreme object of the religious consciousness, transcendent to all the faults and mistakes and errors and illusions of man, or the soul, however high up in evolution. He is therefore addressed as the '*amalan*',[155] the enemy of all defects. He is the cause of the world and its protector and His Feet are to be worshipped. He has made this Āḷvār become a servant of His devotees.[156] He is often identified with the Lord at Tirumalai,[157] Narasimha,[158] Vāmana[159] and Rāma.[160] He had relieved Śiva of his guilt committed at Brahmā.[161] In spite of the fact that all the forms of the Lord represent only one Deity, the Āḷvār declares that his eyes which feasted on the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam would not set on any other thing. This may be taken as hinting at the greatness of that deity or that nothing but the Lord Viṣṇu would attract him. It is therefore apt when Aḷakiya-Maṇavāḷapperumāḷ Nāyaṉār says that this Āḷvār unlike other Āḷvārs is fully devoted to the *arcā* form which is the most approachable form of God.[162]

TIRUMAṄKAIYĀḶVĀR

Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār who won the reputation of *Nālukavipperumāḷ*, displays much erudition like Tirumaḻicaiyāḷvār. He is next to Nammāḷvār in contributing more verses than others. He is the only Āḷvār who successfully tried his hand at various forms of compositions.[163] His two *Matals* are a unique contribution to the *Akam* poetry and to the history of bridal mysticism. Among other Āḷvārs, he has shown greater atten-

155. A.P. 1.
156. ibid. 1.
157. ibid. 1, 3.
158. ibid. 8.
159. ibid. 2, 4.
160. ibid. 2.
161. ibid. 6.
162. Vide: *Tivyārtta-tīpikai* on A.P. 10
163. His works contain references to the names of certain rulers over the regions where some shrines are situated. (Vide Peri. Tm. 3. 2:3; 5.8: 9; 6.6; 7.7: 4).

tion to the description of Nature in his poems. He has, in this respeet, modelled his poems on Campantar's. Almost every verse of his refers to the beauty of Nature. The groves, the *Vedic* atmosphere, festive appearances are all depicted by this saint.[164] To some extent Nammāḷvār could be held to have had attraction for similar aspects of Nature.[165]

The folk-song motifs are successfully handled by this Āḷvār. Some of them are *Kōṭṭumpi*, *Poṅkattam poṅko* and *Kulmaṇitūram.* The bee is asked by the bride to go in search of honey in the flowers which the Lord would usually wear and to get the honey and fragrance from the flowers worn by the Lord of Tirukkaṇṇapuram and blow them on her.[166] *Poṅkattam poṅko* are expressions which make no sense. They are used by persons when they engage themselves in dance signifying their defeat and praying for refuge.[167] These words do not occur anywhere in Tamil literature. *Kulamaṇitūram* is a similar dance.[168]

That the ultimate Reality is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is very well presented by this Āḷvār. The Lord is having Śrī in His chest. His presence is felt in the directions, earth, water, fire and others. He is wind which exists together with sound.[169] He is Himself the *Vedas*, rituals, sky, the two luminaries and the beginning of everything.[170] The Āḷvār admits his dependence and service to the Lord and gets detach-

164. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 7; 3.4: 1; cf. *Tēvāram* 1.79: 3; 1.102: 4.
For further references vide:
Peri. Tm. 3.4: 3. *Tēvāram* 1.129: 1.
ibid. 6.7: 4. ibid., 2.64: 9.
ibid. 9.6: 8. ibid., 1.99: 3.
ibid. 3.8: 8. ibid., 2.122: 2.
165. T.V.M. 5.9; 8.4; 8.9.
166. Peri. Tm. 8.4; cf. T.V.K. (215 to 234).
167. ibid. 10.2.
168. ibid. 10.3.
169. Peri. Tm. 7.6: 7; cf. ibid. 8.7: 7.
170. ibid. 9.4: 9.

ment from the worldly life.[171] He finds it difficult to be away from God and his expression of this feeling has the mystic feature of the bride in love with Him.[172] Those who ever cherish Lord reclining at Tirukkaṭalmallai,[173] Tiruccēṟai[174] are his masters.

He is in every form such as lightning, *Vedas*, moon and free from birth and death. He is of the hue of gold, gem, five elements and so on.[175] The Āḻvār is aware of keeping His Feet on his head. Though He is present in all the forms of the three deities, the form of the Lord with Śrī is quite peculiar. The three deities have the colour of gold, fire and sea but the deity with the colour of the cloud is His deity.[176] The deity could be apprehended only by *Tirumantiram*.[177] Those who meditate upon Him with self-control could visualize Him correctly.[178] Yet, the mind does not set itself on Him steadily and remain there. Devotion could not be practised by Him. Except service at His Feet, he finds no way of getting at Him.[179]

Viṣṇu is the Supreme Person[180] with every thing as His mode (*prakāra*).[181] The cardinal tenets of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system find their support in the works of this Āḻvār.[182] The relationship between the Lord and world is that which exists between the self and the body.[183] The Lord is of every form[184]

---

171. ibid. 6.3.
172. ibid. 8.3.
173. ibid. 2.6.
174. ibid. 7.4.
175. T.N. 1; cf. T.K. 2.
176. T.N. 2.
177. ibid., 4.
178. T.K. 18.
179. ibid. 10.
180. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 1; 4.1: 4; 6.9: 10.
181. ibid. 5.7: 1, 2.
182. cf. ibid. 2.5: 3.
183. ibid. 2.5: 3; 4.1: 2; 6.6: 3; 7.6: 7.
184. ibid. 4.5: 6; 5.6: 5.

and is the Indweller.[185] He Himself receives the oblations[186] which are offered in the holy fire when the sacred rites are undertaken.

The Āḷvār gives a graphic description of each of the ten *avatāras* of Nārāyaṇa. The waters of deluge made the gods seek Viṣṇu for shelter. The Lord took the form of fish and supported the hills on His back bringing them out of the waters.[187] He took the form of tortoise and while supporting the *Mantara* mountain on His back, looked like a mountain supporting another mountain.[188] The earth which was drowned in the sea was brought out by the Lord who took the form of boar. The sun, moon, the gods, the seven worlds, the eight directions, Mēru mountain, the six *Kulaparvatas* and the seven oceans occupy only a portion of the hoof of Ādivarāha.[189] Narasimha is the name of the form which God assumed to kill Hiraṇyakaśipu whose body was ripped open into two by Him with the claws. The blood that flowed then from the body of the demon was thrice in quantity the waters of deluge.[190] Nārāyaṇa came to King Bali in the form of a Dwarf and like a sage uttering the *Vedas* impressed upon the king that he was a genuine beggar. When He got the gift of three Feet of land, His Foot grew big beyond the *Mantara* mountain and passed through the seven upper regions and was worshipped by the moon and Brahmā.[191] The Lord became Parasurāma, who destroyed the kings for twenty-one generations. He is the Lord of Śrī, Bhūdevi and Nīḷā.[192] As Rāma, the Lord killed Mārīca Who appeared before Him and Sītā in the enchanting form of a deer to effect a separation between them. He reduced the demon Rāvaṇa and his

185. ibid. 2.5: 7; 7.2.
186. ibid. 5.6: 5.
187. ibid. 11.4 : 1.
188. ibid. 11.4 : 2.
189. ibid. 11.4 : 3; cf. 4.4 : 8.
190. ibid. 11.4 ; 4.
191. ibid. 11.4 : 5.
192. ibid. 11.4 : 6.

hordes to utter extinction.[193] Next is described Haṁsāvatāra.[194] The achievements of Kṛṣṇa such as killing Pūtana, Kuvalayāpīdā and others are celebrated.[195] With less details, these *avatāras* are described in another part of this composition.[196] There is fine poetic beauty in the depiction of the feelings of the demons in the battle between Rāvaṇa and Rāma.[197] The demons request the monkeys not to harass them.[198] The *līlās* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are depicted in the form of conversations between two female companions.[199]

The Āḷvārs are mainly instrumental for the popularisation of the *arcā* form of worship which came into vogue on the strength of the *Āgamic* preachings. They followed the principles of *Āgamas* and evolved a synthesis of all the forms of the Supreme Being. The exploits of the Lord in His descent have been quite popular among the people through the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas.* They have been frequently cited by the Āḷvārs to heighten the importance of the *arcā* forms. Being deep meditators of the Indweller, they have been frequently laying stress on the *antaryāmin* form of the deity.

Though all the Āḷvārs had given primary importance to the shrines where God is worshipped in the *arcā* form, the first three Āḷvārs, Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār, Nammāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār paid attention to this form by singing in praise of the deity in more temples drawing a synthesis even among the *arcā* forms.[200] It is the praise conferred on the deity in such shrines which the Āḷvārs visited that brought into vogue a new concept of temple worship in South India. Those shrines which have received *maṅgalāsāsanam* of the Āḷvārs

193. ibid. 11.4:7.
194. ibid. 11.4:8.
195. ibid. 11.4:9, 10.
196. ibid. 8.8.
197. ibid. 10.2.
198. ibid. 10.3.
199. ibid. 11.5.
200. Peri. Tm. 10.1; T.N. 8; C. TML. Kan. 69 to 74.

came to be regarded as supreme in importance and are known as '*pāṭal peṟṟa talaṅkaḷ*' (temples celebrated by the hymns). Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār enjoy a special repute in this respect. The former is the only Āḻvār who visited almost all the shrines which[201] are now called 'temples celebrated by the hymns' and some were sung only by him and some others were extolled only by Nammāḻvār.[202] Among 108 temples there are five temples having more than one hundred verses viz., Tiruvaraṅkam 247, Tiruvēṅkaṭam 213, Tirukkaṇṇapuram 128, Tirumāliruñcōlai 114 and Tirunaṟaiyūr 109. Special mention requires to be made here of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's particular contribution to the shrines of Tirukkaṇṇapuram, Tirunaṟaiyūr, Tiruvaraṅkam and Tiruviṇṇakar.[203] The Āḻvār has sung a centum of verses on each of the deities of Tirukkaṇṇapuram[204] and Tirunaṟaiyur.[205] Tiruvarankam[206] gets half a centum, Tiruvēṅkaṭam[207] four decads, and Tiruviṇṇakar[208] three decads.

The Āḻvār makes specific reference to the prevalence of *Vedic* study and *Vedic* recitals in some places where the shrines are situated[209]. The brahmins who dwell there attend to their *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya* rituals and teach the *Vedas* to others.[210] The brahmins in Pullampūtaṅkuṭi never utter a lie, are well studied in the *Vedas* and are great through the worship of three fires and have reputation for that, forbearance and generosity.[211] The smoke of incense arising

201. This brings out the importance of the impact of the *Nālāyiram* on temples and temple worship.
202. Vide *Appendix*-V for a list of shrines celebrated exclusively by these two Āḻvārs and by Pūtattāḻvār, Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār, Kulacēkarāḻvār and Periyāḻvār.
203. Many of these shrines are all situated in and near the banks of Kāviri.
204. Peri. Tm. 8.1 to 8.10.
205. ibid. 6.4 to 6.10; 7.1 to 7.3.
206. ibid. 5.4 to 5.8.
207. ibid. 1.8 to 1.10 and 2.1.
208. ibid. 6.1 to 6.3.
209. ibid. 3.10 : 1; 4.1 : 3, 7, 8; 4.2 : 10; 4.3 : 2, 3, 6; 4.6 : 1; 10; 4.8 : 8.
210. ibid. 2.10 : 2; 3.5 : 6; 4.2 : 2; 5.9 : 6, 9.
211. ibid. 5.1 : 5, 8.

from the rites performed add to the fragrance filling Tiruvaraṅkam.[212] The performance of the *Sōma* sacrifice at Tirukkōvalūr by the brahmins whose mind is pure and who are well-versed in the four *Vedas* is stated to have brought about the rich growth of paddy there.[213] Each house in this sacred place is stated to be resounding with the recitation of the *Vedas*. *The maṇṭapams* in the houses which were situated in the charming streets there were occupied by the *Vedic* scholars who adopted a particular method of studying the *Vedas* known as '*vāram*' which consisted in giving the *padapāṭha* (splitting the *samhitā* portion of the *Veda* into separate words) of the entire text whose beginning would be mentioned by one of the scholars assembled there.[214]

A special reference is required to be made here to Tirukkōvalūr which is described by this Āḻvār as prosperous having scholars. Goddess Durga, with the deer as her vehicle, is present in the shrine. She has eight hands and is stated to guard that place.[215] Men of restraint create the impression that this place could be that of Śiva who rides on the bull, and their wealth suggests its identity with the city of Kubēra. The charm of the place leads to mistake it to be the dwelling of Indra. Brahmā could be taken to live there from the *Vedic* recitations which go on there.[216] The great men who live there appear as capable of great achievements which expected of Brahmā and Śiva.[217]

Citrakūṭam is graphically described by this Āḻvār as a prosperous place with fine groves.[218] Three thousand brahmins offer worship every day to the Lord in this place.[219] They are

---

212. ibid. 5.4: 7.
213. ibid. 2.10:1.
214. ibid. 2.10:5.
215. ibid. 2.10:6.
216. ibid. 2.10:8.
217. ibid. 2.10:9.
218. ibid. 3.2:1, 3, 5.
219. ibid. 3.2:8.

well studied in the *Vedas* and offer worship daily in the sacred fires.[220] Girls listen there to the recitation of the *Vedic* texts and reproduce even the lengthy passages in tact. The parrots, which listen to this recitation, reproduce them to the brahmins for their revision or reutterance of those passages.[221] The Lord is frequently described as going through the streets of Tillai Tiruccitrakūṭam showing that the deity is taken in procession on the occasion of festivals.[222] The Lord is taken on the vehicle Garuḍa.[223] He will present Himself as Narasimha on a particular day during the procession[224] and would pass through the streets.

Tirunaṟaiyūr is described as a place inhabited by *Vedic* scholars. The shrine in that place is stated to have a very huge golden door. Śrī stands by the side of the Lord of enchanting appearance. She resembles the slender *vañci* creeper, her gait resembles that of the swans, has the looks of the deer and her tresses bear comparison to the plume of the peacock. In thinness, her waist resembles the lightning. Her shoulders are bent like the tender bamboo; her breasts resemble the jars. With the lips red like *kōvai* fruit, her eyes resemble the fish.[225] This is the bewitching description of Śrī in *arcā* form given only here.

The streets of Tirunaṟaiyūr are ever putting up a charming appearance on the occasion of temple festivals and when the sacred rites are performed.[226] A similar description is given of Tirumaṇimāṭakkōvil,[227] Vaikunṭhaviṇṇakaram.[228] Arimēyaviṇṇakaram[229] and Tirutteṟṟiyampalem.[230] The beauti-

---

220. ibid. 3.2 : 2.
221. ibid. 3.2 : 6.
222. ibid. 3.3 : 1 to 5.
223. ibid. 3.3 : 6.
224. ibid. 3.3 : 8.
225. P. TML. Kaṇ. 72 to 80.
226. Peri. Tm. 6.4: 8; 6.7 : 1.
227. ibid. 3.8 : 4.
228. ibid. 3.9 : 2.
229. ibid. 3.10 : 2.
230. ibid. 4.4 : 8.

ful streets of Tiruvaḷuntūr are inhabited by brahmins who are not old in age and who worship the fire at the three fixed times during the day.[231] Tirukkaṇṇapuram receives an effective and detailed description at the hands of this Āḷvār who devoted one hundred verses[232] for this purpose. Devotees of God assemble there on occasions of festivals.[233] They are well-versed in the *Vedas*.[234] The place Tiruppullāṇi is described in the ideal setting. The deity would fulfil the wish of the devotee who worships His Feet every day. If He does not grant the wish even then, the devotee shall continue to offer the worship.[235] The *koels* also utter the words *"ari, ari"* in the graves surrounding the temple at Tiruveḷḷiyaṅkuṭi [236]. Cīkāḷi which is referred to Kāḷiccīrāmavinnakaram, is described as a place inhabited by brahmins well-versed in the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*, who performed the five daily sacrifices. The place resounds with music. The streets are filled with the pomp of the festivals of the Lord there.[237] The streets in Tiruvāli are broad enough for dragging of the temple car with the deity in it.[238]

The Āḷvār's life is a typical case of *viṣayā-kāma* (amorousness) turned into *Bhagavat-kāma* (divine love). Nature mysticism enables the Āḷvār to enjoy the Beauty of God objectively in all things and it turns into true immanent mysticism. At this stage the Āḷvār-nāyaki develops a view and vision of Bhagavāṉ as Love in the form of Kṛṣṇa enthroned in her heart. She is much captured and captivated by the entrancing beauty of the Beloved that it is relished even

---

231. ibid. 7.5 : 1.
232. ibid. 8.1 to 8.10:
233. ibid. 8.7 : 2.
234. ibid. 8.7 : 7.
235. ibid. 9.3 : 9.
236. ibid. 4.10 : 7.
237. ibid. 3.4 : 1.
238. ibid. 3.6 : 6.

in the physical plane.[239] Throughout the hymns[240] describing his bridal path of love God is seen as the cunning Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter of souls, playing the game of 'hide and seek'. The Beatific vision of the Lord is only for a brief interval of time and has disappeared; it is mostly sensuous and empirical but it stabilises love or *bhakti* by directing it inward.

The bride now experiences *viśleṣa*; the sorrows of separation are more intense and last longer. But this experience is spiritual one as it is a process of negation by its fulfilment. In this stage, *Bhagavat-kāma* is purified by *vairagyā* of the taint arising out of *viṣaya-kāma*. The experience of separation is one long tale of sorrow and depression. It starts with simple pain and ends with irresistible agony.[241] Generally the experience of separation passes through three usual stages of distress, depression and defiance. The soft gentle southern breeze is felt as a burning gale by the bride.[242] Her body languishes and loses weight and the bracelets drop down.[243] Every moment is like an aeon for her.[244] The colour of her body changes; she feels even the sāndal-paste as blasts of fire[245]. No sensation, song or soul that does not reveal Him has any existence or value.[246] In divine madness, she has no thought of food or drink and she spends sleepless days and nights.[247] Then sorrow increases with continued disappointment.[248] It is a favourite dramatic device of the Āḷvār mystics to express the agony of separation in the words of

239. Peri. Tm. 2.8; T.N. 21, 22, 24, 25.
240. There are 21 decads in *Periya Tirumoli* besides his two *Maṭals* and twenty verses in *Tirunetuntāṇṭakam* (11–30) describing his bridal path of love.
241. Peri. Tm. 3.6.
242. ibid. 2.7 : 4.
243. ibid. 8.3; T.N. 12, 19, 23, 25.
244. ibid. 2 7 : 4.
245. ibid. 2.7: 3, 9; T.N. 17.
246. ibid. 2.7: 5, 7, 8.
247. ibid. 1.5.5: 1.3; 8.2: 4; T.N. 11, 12.
248. ibid. 3.7: 4.8.

the mother,[249] and friends and of messages to the Beloved.[250] This is an adaptation from the Tamil technique of love poetry. The elopment of the lovers and consequent lamentations of the mother (*makaṭpōkkiya tāy iraṅkal*)[251] are found to be resourceful topics for poetic imagination.[252] The fond mother is sorely distressed by the failing health and sick-mindedness of the daughter in her forlorn state.[253] The artful Māyaṉ or Kaṇṇaṉ as the seducer of souls had secretly entered into her heart and stolen it away.[254] The bride raves about Him.[255] The mother implores Him to have mercy on the poor bride.[256] She is unable to find out the cause of her daughter's madness. In another mood, she thinks that it is an incurable disease due to possession by evil spirits and seeks to propitiate them by offerings like toddy and meat.[257] But divine intoxication is different in kind from possession by the devil and diabolical mysticism. So she is lost in helplessness and drops down in despair.

The crisis is reached when the dark night of the soul or depression arrives and the bride is consumed in flaming love. The heart melts away like wax. While all nature is asleep in the dark night, she alone is awake;[258] she is tormented by the sense of separation. She bursts into agony. She weeps and wails and cries aloud and her body is bathed in overflowing tears.[259] In her sinking mood she addresses crows, cuckoos,

---

249. ibid. 2.7; 3.7; 4 8; 5.5; 8.1; 8,2; 9.9; 10.9.
250. ibid. 3.6; 9 3; 9.4; T.N. 26, 27.
251. ibid. 3.7.
252. Out of 378 Caṅkam *Akam* poets, 28 poets have entertained a partiality for these related themes with the result that they are touchingly treated in 122 poems (i.e. one-seventh of the total *kaḷavu* poems) with a depth of psychological acumen (vide: *The Tamil Concept of Love in Akattiṇai.* pp. 57–59).
253. ibid. 5.5.
254. ibid. 3.7.
255. ibid. 4.8: 8.1; 8.2.
256. ibid. 9.9.
257. T.N, 11.
258. Peri. Tm 8.5: 2, 6.
259. ibid. 11.1; 11.2; 11.3.

lizards, parrots, cocks to make omen-cries or sounds signifying the coming of her Lord.[260] But her Kaṇṇaṉ Who is the Giver of love and so easily accessible is nowhere to be seen; yet He has entered into her soul and is inescapable.[261] Nature is very sympathetic to her moods and reflects them. The birds with their mating instincts also express their sympathy with her in her parted state. She then sends messages of her forlorn state through the birds and even her mind itself.[262] Kaṇṇaṉ is in her inner eye and also the self as its light and also in her poesy.[263] Yet the mind knows Him not.[264] Kaṇṇaṉ, the Māyaṉ, dwells in her and yet she pines away.[265]

The stage comes when she becomes desperate and defiant and resorts to the device of foiled feminine love known in Tamil as *Maṭal.* She publicly censures Him for having wounded her by His shafts of love and deserted her when the suffering was acute and could be cured only by Him. In both the *Maṭals,* she abandons her shyness and reticence and publicly exposes His cruelty and faithlessness. The mood very soon changes from assault to remorse and prayer for mercy. The soul clings to Kaṇṇaṉ and Kaṇṇaṉ alone and He cannot escape her. The *avatāra* who came down only for the Āḻvār is Āḻvār-mad. He longs to reunite with her purified by self-naughting and the feeling of unworthiness. He Who hides Himself in the light of her lyric poesy as his Inner '*I*' longs for communing with her in the nakedness of her beauty.[266] He eagerly yearns for living in the Āḻvār's song, soul and every sensation. In her inner life as what He is rather than what He does and He longs to possess her whole being or true being. As *prema* to start with, the Āḻvār is seized with a sense of sinfulness and God-fearingness; but his mystic love reasserts itself and he realizes his intimacy with God as lover

260. ibid. 10.10.
261. ibid. 7.3; 8.9.
262. ibid. 9.3; 9.4; T.N. 26, 27.
263. ibid. 8.10 : 9.
264. ibid. 9.2 : 8.
265. ibid. 9.2; 11.3; T.N. 28, 29.
266. ibid. 9.2 : 1.

and is blessed with the boon and grace of the unitive life, and the stability of the eternal Light even beyond Badari, the highest peak of spirituality here below.[267]

The *Ciṟiya-tirumaṭal* is in defence of *kāma* as a pursuit in life, but it is directed towards the higher purpose of reaching the Lord. The word '*kātal*' applies to worldly love and also in its perfected state to spiritual love. People talk of attaining *mokṣa* by getting rid of this body. In the meanwhile, the aspirant of *mokṣa* shall live on fruits and leaves that fall from the trees of their own accord. He has to undergo untold sufferings like living in cottages and taking bath in tanks bracing at times the inclemencies of weather. If all this is to be admitted, no one who is said to have obtained *mokṣa* has come back to report that Paramapada is a place of bliss and shall therefore be preferred to material love. Mere talk of the nature of *mokṣa* does not carry any conviction and so it would be prudent on the part of people to stop discoursing on it. *Dharma* as a *puruṣārtha* will enable one to get to heaven after death and sport with gazelle-eyed women, listen to enchanting music and move in the ethereal region. *Artha* as a *puraṣārtha* yields the same results. Desire or *kāma* is the basis for both these and so it is better to stick to *kāma* and achieve those two ends.[268]

The tradition of the Tamils is that men alone shall undertake *maṭalūrtal*,[269] but Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār rejects this convention following the tradition of Sanskrit literature.[270] Adoption of *maṭal* way would become practicable only when the sense of shame is completely given up and when one could proceed through the streets for exhibiting one's love. Women who are by nature bashful, would not be in a position to adopt '*maṭal*' and this is perhaps the basis for the Tamils' restricting the adoption of this method to men. The Āḻvār, however, remarks that those who do not adopt and admit the Sanskrit

267. ibid. 1.3; 1.4.
268. P. TML. Kaṉ. 11 to 18.
269. ibid. Kaṉ. 38, 39.
270. P. TML. Kaṉ. 40.

tradition could not realize the effects of application of sandal paste, southern breeze, the sweet sound emanating from the bamboo, of the oxen, shriek of the *a͟nṟil* and so on.[271] The Āḷvār cites then instances which show women, unable to repress their love, went after their lovers. Graphic and pathetic is the description of Sītā's following Rāma to the forest.[272] Vēgavati, a maiden, could not find her lover in his place, went to the battle field, aroused him from slumber and enjoyed his company.[274] Ulūpi, the daughter of the Nāgas, compelled Arjuna to break his vow of celebacy and spent a pleasant time with him.[274] Uṣā, the daughter of Bāṇāsura, had a dream wherein appeared a handsome youth whom her friend identified to be Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna and grandson of Kṛṣṇa. Her friend Citralekhā brought him stealthily to her whose company Uṣā enjoyed without the knowledge of her father.[275] Pārvati openly adopted penance as the weapon to force Śiva to come to her which when fully described would be another *Mahābhārata*.[276]

It is very creditable on the part of this Āḷvār to suggest that the bride of the Āḷvār felt her passion aroused at the sight of Śrī by the side of the Lord at Tirunaṟaiyūr.[277] The sounds of the sea, the moon-lit night, southern breeze, the feeble voice of female *a͟nṟil* on the palm tree were enough to make her position intolerable.[278] She throws a challenge to the Lord that if He were not to accept her love, she would publicly declare His base and bad activities such as getting tied to a pestle for stealing butter, eating cart-loads of food intended for Indra, going as a messenger in spite of his being insulted, insulting women like Sūrpaṇagā who loved him and killing Tāṭaki.[279]

---

271. ibid. Kaṇ. 39 to 44.
272. ibid. Kaṇ. 45 to 51.
273. ibid. Kaṇ. 52 to 55.
274. ibid. Kaṇ. 55 to 59.
275. ibid. Kaṇ. 60 to 64; Bhāg. P. 10 : 62.
276. ibid. Kaṇ. 65 to 71.
277. ibid. Kaṇ. 77 to 80.
278. ibid. Kaṇ. 81 to 85.
279. ibid. Kaṇ. 137 to 147.

What was set forth in favour of *kāma* as the worthy pursuit of life in *Ciṟiya-tirumaṭal* is confirmed in *Periya-tirumaṭal*. In the former, there is vivid depiction of the arrival of Kṛṣṇa by the bride who was playing ball. He came playing *kuṭakkūttu* which attracted her and so she went out of the house to witness it.[280] She lost at once her beautiful complexion, and bangles slipped off from her hand.[281] Her mother came there and did *rakṣa* with the dust.[282] She bowed to the deity Sāttaṉ, now known Ayyapaṉ at Sabarimalai in Kerala State. She was not used to do this, but she did without getting any result.[283] A sooth-sayer was brought there and it was predicted by her that the deity with the thousand names was responsible for her malady.[284] The exploits of the Supreme Person, particularly those of Kṛṣṇa, are all mentioned in detail.[285] The bride would have adopted '*maṭalūrtal*' but for the fear that she would be scandalised for doing so.[286] She could not send her mind as a messenger, since it had not come back to her from the ocean-complexioned Lord.[287] Her love for the Lord is deep and immeasurable as it is vast as the ocean.[288] She cites the incident of Vāsavadatta, going through the streets after Vatsarāja.[289] She was not condemned by any one and so the bride makes up her mind to take up '*maṭalūrtal*'.[290] She will utter His names through the streets.[291]

---

280. C. TML. Kaṇ. 13, 14.
281. ibid. Kaṇ. 14.
282. ibid. Kaṇ. 16.
283. ibid. Kaṇ. 17, 18.
284. ibid. Kaṇ. 20 to 24.
285. ibid. Kaṇ. 28 to 55.
286. ibid. Kaṇ. 57.
287. ibid. Kaṇ. 60 to 63.
288. ibid. Kaṇ. 64, 65.
289. ibid. Kaṇ. 68 to 71. This incident is not traceable to any *Purāṇa* as suggested by *Tivyārtta-tīpikai* (p. 7). It is contained in the *Pratijñayangandharāyana* of Bhāsa and Somadeva's *Kathāsaritrasāgara*.
290. ibid. Kaṇ. 77.
291. ibid. Kaṇ. 74 to 77. cf. If the thousand names could be recited to glorify Him, it must be quite possible to repeat the same for condemning Him also. (Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai on ibid.).

In the *Tiruveḻukkūṟṟirukkai* the Āḻvār revels in the use of numbers from one to seven for *Citrabhandha* (a kind of poem of acrostics). The word '*one*' may refer to the unique nature of the Lord, apart from time, *sattva* quality. The number '*two*' denotes the pair of Feet of the Lord, besides the sun and moon and others. The three strides of the Lord are referred to by the number '*three*' besides three qualities, the three worlds, three fires, sacred thread and others. The word '*four*' refers to the *Vedas*, four pursuits of life and many others. The five weapons of Viṣṇu are meant by the number '*five*',[292] besides the five sacrifices, five elements and others. The word '*six*' could refer to the six schools, bee which is six-footed (*aṟu-patam*), six tastes and others. The number '*seven*' refers to seven worlds. Care is taken to start with number '*one*' up to '*seven*' depicting what each stands for in relation to the Lord and come down from that number to number '*one*' in the same way.

The Āḻvār got every thing from the Supreme Person Himself. He dwells in great detail on the *Tirumantra* showing its importance. It is admitted that through the worship of the *arcā* form of God that any one turns a theist and in this respect, the contribution of this Āḻvār is invaluable. The prefix '*periya*' to his composition *Periya Tirumoḻi* brings out not only the larger number of verses he had composed but also its greatness through poetic beauty and the sense it conveys. The number of verses and to stages through which love for God is made to develop justify the title *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam*. The sages, mother and bride contribute in this piece respectively in the first, second and third tens. Besides, the name '*Kaliyan*' which tefers to this Āḻvār is the Tamilised form of '*Kalihā*' which means that this Āḻvār contributed much for destroying the effects of Kali age through his compositions.

PERIYĀḶVĀR

Periyāḻvār attained greatness by offerig to God the garland which his foster-daughter Aṇṭāḷ wore at first before it

292. cf. Appar's *Tēvāram* 4.26:5; 4.53:7.

was offered to the deity[293] and also for blessing the Lord with long life and wishing for Him every prosperity.[294] The word '*periya*' which is prefixed to his name, thus suggests his greatness, although he was not great in the sense of being senior to other Āḻvārs in age or by composing more verses than others. He himself refers to the name he enjoyed during his life time among his contemporaries and to his erudition.[295]

The ardent attachment which the self has for God is not altogether free from entertaining apprehensions about the safety of the deity. The Supreme Person is verily omnipotent and could protect Himself. In fact, it is He that protects every one from dangers Yet, too much of affection scents dangers.[296] The beauty, goodness and auspiciousness which are stored only in Him may perhaps catch the evil eye of some people and so, the devotee feels that it is his duty to wish well of God and pray for His well-being so that the world may be happy. It is not therefore a surprise if Kausalyā observed certain auspicious rites at the time of Rāma's departure to the forest and pronounced *maṅgaḷam* for Him.[297] The citizens of Ayodhyā bowed to all the deities in order to keep Rāma in good repute.[298] The sages too who met Rāma as He entered the forest welcomed Him offering *maṅgaḷam* to Him.[299]

In the twelve verses of *Tiruppallāṇṭu*. Periyāḻvār offers *maṅgāḷam* to the Feet of the Lord,[300] Śrī, discus, conch and

---

293. *Godāśtuti'* 10.

294. *Pallāṇṭu*

295. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.1: 10; 1.3: 10, 1.4: 10; 1.5: 10; 1.7: 11; 2.2: 11; 2.3: 13, 2.4: 10; 2.7: 10; 2.8: 10; 2.10: 10; 3.1: 11; 3.2: 10; 3.4: 10; 3.5: 11; 4.1: 10; 4.4: 11; 4.6: 10; 4.9: 11.

296. cf. *Abhijñāna Śākuntala.* Act V.

297. Rām. Ayodhya. 25 : 28 to 45.

298. ibid. 2.52.

299. ibid. Āranya. 1 : 11, 12. cf. *Śrī Guṇaratnakōśa* 24 where the five weapons of Viṣṇu are ever ready to keep a keen watch over the person of the Lord. Tyāgarāja too asks people to offer their prayers for protection to Rāma in the Bairavirāga kīrtana "Rakṣa peṭṭarē".

300. T.P.L. 1.

to the close proximity between the Lord and His devotees.[301] The Āḷvār invites people, even of those in heaven to mingle together for this purpose.[302] The *maṅgaḷam* is offered to the Lord Who killed Hiraṇyakaśipu,[303] Bāṇa,[304] Rāvaṇa and his hordes[305]. This piece refers to the devotees' keen desire to have the remnants of what the Lord had used,[306] the festival[307] conducted on the day which is in connection with the constellation '*Tiruvōṇam*'. The Āḷvār makes a clear pronouncement about the greatness of the Lord's name[308] and himself as belonging to a family where all his ancestors in seven generations have been the servants of the Lord.[309]

Periyāḷvār was much attracted to Kṛṣṇa Whose childhood is very well depicted by him. The festivities celebrated by the inhabitants of Gokulam when Kṛṣṇa was born is graphically deseribed.[310] The divine child is described from feet to head by Yacoda and the minute description is very artistically presented.[311] The various decorations are sent by the gods for bedecking the child who is put in the cradle and the lullaby is sung by Yacodā;[312] Yacodā's calling the moon to be near the child is full of references to Kṛṣṇa's divinity.[313] Elegance marks the depiction as Yacodā's request to Kṛṣṇa's *ceṅkīrai*[314] and *cappāṇi.*[315] The gentle and faltering steps of the child

301. ibid. 2.
302. ibid. 4.
303. ibid. 6.
304. ibid. 7.
305. ibid. 3.
306. ibid. 9.
307. ibid. 6, 9.
308. ibid. 4, 11, 12.
309. ibid. 6.
310. Periyaḷ. Tm. 1.1.
311. ibid. 1.2.
312. ibid. 1.3.
313. ibid. 1.4.
314. ibid. 1.5; the first voluntary movements of the child is known as '*ceṅkīrai*'.
315. ibid. 1.6; *coppāṇi* is the first clapping of the hands, cf. Peri. Tm. 10.5.

Kṛṣṇa are vividly portrayed[316] The *accō* stage is set on an ideal background of the exploits of the Lord as Vāmana and others.[317] It is doubtful whether any woman could describe better the feelings she would have had when her child clings to her back. Yacodā, rather Periyāḷvār, depicts this aspect with extraordinary grace[318] which is equalled only by the Āḷvār's depiction of '*appūccik-kāṭṭal*'[319]. Yacodā's asking the child to suck her breasts gives the pen-portrait of the child approaching the mother in certain poses.[320] The twelve names of the Lord are used in the decad describing the lovely ear-lobes of the child by addressing with one name in each verse.[321] The celebration of the whole occasion is described in detail commencing with the women folk assembled to participate in the celebration. The bath for Kṛṣṇa is arranged and Yacodā asks Him to take the bath leaving aside His pranks.[322] The dressing of the hair,[323] bringing a stick[324] and decoration of the hair with various flowers[325] are all well described. Yacodā takes proper precautions to see that evil eyes are not cast on the child and hence undertakes *rakṣa* for Him.[326] The complaints of the women regarding Kṛṣṇa's mischief and Yocoda's asking the boy not to play tricks and come to her are vividly portrayed.[327] References are made here to the Lord as enshrined in *arcā* forms as in the previous decad. Kṛṣṇa's drinking away the milk,[328] eating away the rice cooked with jaggery,[329] and snatching away the bangles of a girl and giving

316. ibid. 1.7.
317. ibid. 1.8. cf. the last decad of T.V.K.
318. ibid. 1.9.
319. ibid. 2.1.
320. ibid. 2.2.
321. ibid. 2.3.
322. ibid. 2.4.
323. ibid. 2.5.
324. ibid. 2.6.
325. ibid. 2.7.
326. ibid. 2.8.
327. ibid. 2.9.
328. ibid. 2.9: 5
329. ibid. 2.9: 7

them to another girl for buying rose-apples in exchaage[330] are skilfully presented by women to Yacodā. Yacodā recounts His mischievous acts to Him on His face and refuses to give Him breast-milk.[331] She feels sorry for having sent the child after the cows in the hot sun without allowing Him to play with His friends and without giving even footwear and umbrella.[432] The motherly affection and the pride of having such a charming child causing jealousy in the mind of other women are ably portrayed and are superb and graceful.[332] Admirable is the description of the behaviour of women of Gokulam (Āyarpāṭi) when they cast their looks at the boy Kṛṣṇa Who was returning in the evening after tending the cows.[334] The description of the Govardhana hill and its lifting by Kṛṣṇa and playing on the flute are well conceived.[335] The exhilarating effect of the sound of the flute is vividly portrayed with the minutest details of Kṛṣṇa applying His little fingers on the holes of the flute and the movements of His lips and the fine bending of His eyebrows when He played on the pipe.[336] The effect of His music on celestial women, sages like Nārada, semi-divine beings like *kinnaras* is well depicted.[337] The celestial dancers like Menaka and her other three comrades, and the *gandharvas* became aware of their insignificant position in dance and music and felt ashamed.[380] The denizens of heaven came down to Gokulam and were following Kṛṣṇa wherever He was proceeding to listen to His music.[339] The bird species deserted their nets and kept lying on the ground, the cows came alert with rapt attention without even moving their ear-lobes, the deer stopped grazing and listened with attention to the music with grass-lits still clinging to

330. ibid. 2.9: 10.
331. ibid. 3.1.
332; ibid. 3.2.
333. ibid. 3.5.
334. ibid. 3.4.
335. ibid. 3.5; 3.6.
336. ibid. 3.6: 8.
337. ibid. 3.6: 3.5.
338. ibid. 3.6: 4, 6.
339. ibid. 3.6: 7.

their mouths and seemed as if they were in picture.[340] The trees began to exude the flow of honey, and the branches turned towards Kṛṣṇa offering flowers exuding honey.[341] The mother's description of how her little daughter felt fascinated by Kṛṣṇa is ably portrayed[342] as also her anxiety about her daughter's safety when she is not found in the abode and therefore guessed to have gone after Him [343] She is apprehensive of the scandal that may arise as a result of this incident. A kind of sport called '*untiparaṭṭal*' in which little girls take part is described about the child Kṛṣṇa.[344] Hanuman's offering the identity regarding Rāma to Sīta are beautifully depicted.[345] The Āḷvār mentions that there are people who had directly seen God in his descents as Ṇarasimha,[346] Rāma in the sacrificial hall of Janaka,[347] on the seashore on the eve of crossing the ocean to reach Laṅka,[348] Kṛṣṇa when He killed the seven bulls,[349] in the battlefield[350], while on the throne with ten thousand wives,[351] in the battle field of Bhārata,[352] hiding the sun with discus[353] and as Varāha having Bhūdevi on his side.[354] The Tirumāliruñcōlai hills are beautifully described as belonging to the Lord Whose exploits are recounted.[355] The holy place of Tirukkōṭṭiyūr is well described as a place inhabited by brahmins deeply learned in the *Vedas* and so must have done good deeds in their previous births to inhabit that

---

340. ibid. 3.6: 8.9.
341. ibid. 3.6: 10.
342. ibid. 3.7.
343. ibid. 3.8,
344. ibid. 3.9. cf. TVK. Tiruvuntiyār (295–314).
345. ibid. 3.10.
346. ibid. 4.1: 1.
347. ibid. 4.1: 2.
348. ibid. 4.1: 3.
349. ibid. 4.1: 4.
350. ibid. 4.1: 5.
351. ibid, 4.1 : 6.
352. ibid. 4.1 : 7.
353. ibid. 4.1 : 8.
354. ibid. 4.1 : 9.
355, ibid. 4.2; 4 3

place.[356] People who do not extol the deity in the shrine there but are after only wealth, cloth and food, must be great sinners.[357] The world is really lucky in being able to get the contact with the dust of the feet of those who praise this deity.[358] Such devotees have the right to sell their devotees to others for any praise,[359] that is, the devotee of God shall treat himself as a servant of *bhāgavatas.*

The Āḷvār asks people to utter the names of God even if it is necessary to go about begging.[360] The holy shrine of Śrī Raṅgam is described in three decads.[361] In this description are contained much of the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism. The Lord will always be by the side of His devotees whatever be the nature of the activities.[362] He Himself takes His men to His place.[363] The devotee shall worship the Lord even in advance, as he is not likely to think of Him in his deathbed.[364] If the Lord's Feet are worshipped with flowers to the recitation of *Ṛg*, *Yajur* and *Sāma Vedas* then that time must be considered good, otherwise it will be a day of fast.[365] All the diseases left him because of the protection he received from the Lord.[366]

ĀṆṬĀḶ

Āṇṭāḷ the foster-daughter of Periyāḷvār composed two poems of which one is the well-known *Tiruppāvai* and the other is *Nācciyār-tirumoḷi.* The *Tiruppāvai* is in thirty verses which teach people of their dependencc upon God and of the

356. ibid. 4.4.
357. ibid. 4.4: 3, 4, 5.
358. ibid. 4.4: 6.
359. ibid. 4.4: 10.
360. ibid. 4.6. cf. ibid. 4.5.
361. ibid. 4.8; 4.9; 4.10.
362. ibid. 4.9: 2.
363. ibid. 4.9: 3.
364. ibid. 4.10: 1.
365. ibid. 5.1: 6.
366. ibid. 5.2.

need to serve only the Lord. This doctrine which is based on *śeṣatva* is derived from the *Upaniṣads*.[367] The whole piece is addressed to the maidens for undertaking a solemn observance during *hēmanta* season in the first month. The observance is known as *Kātyāyani-vṛata*, worshipping Kātyāyanī, the goddess for receiving a suitable husband. The *Bhāgavata* refers to this observance by the maidens in Gokulam who bathed in the Yamuna before daybreak and worshipped the image of that goddess made of sand. The request of these maidens was to Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nandagopa as their husband They used to go to the river singing the glory of Kṛṣṇa all the way.[368]

Āṇṭāḷ, being an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu, takes up only the element of undertaking the observance, the deity to ber worshipped being only Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She conceived her place Śrī Villiputtūr as Gokulam. The maidens there, were considered as the maidens of the cowherds, and the temple of the Lord there as the abode of Nandagopa.

The whole piece of *Tiruppāvai* could be taken to have been divided into six groups of five verses each, the first group of verses representing the nature of absorvance that she is undertaking. The maidens are called out for participating in the observance. They have to take bath early in the morning and avoid taking ghee, milk and applying collyrium to the eyes and wearing flowers. They shall avoid doing the forbidden acts and uttering evil expressions. They would offer gifts to the deserving[369]. Besides getting Kṛṣṇa for their husband, their observance would bestow on lands plenty of timely showers, peace and above all vast yieid of milk on which the cowherds live. They have to sing the names of Puruṣottama Who measured the worlds.[370] They request the lord of rain to shower enough water for their bath.[371] They shall approach

367. Vide: *Taṉiyaṉ* beginning with '*Nīlā*'.
368. Bhāg. P. 10.22: 1 to 6.
369. T. Pv. 2.
370. ibid. 3.
371. ibid. 4: cf. *Tiruvempāvai* 16.

the Lord with pure mind, offer pure flowers, bend before Him, utter His names and meditate upon, with the result that the sins committed previously and that are likely to be committed in the future would be utterly destroyed.[372] The time for starting to the river is announced by the chirping of birds, the blowing of the conch and the brahmins uttering the words '*hari*' when they get up.[373]

The second group of verses is devoted to rousing the maidens from their sleep. The cowherdesses begin to churn the curds.[374] The mothers of some of those maidens are requested to awaken their daughters.[375] One gopī asks one of the maidens who is sleeping to rise up and open the door.[376] In the third group of verses, the maidens are called to follow her to the abode of Nandagopa.[377] Some who have detachment for the world wear the saffron robes and go through the streets to their temples blowing the conches.[378] The maidens also intend to proceed to sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa.[379] The fourth group describes how the gate-keepers of the mansion of Nandagopa are requested to open the doors and permit them to enter for awakening Kṛṣṇa.[380] Nandagopa, Yacodā and Balarāma are then requested to wake up[381] Nappinnai is then asked to open the door.[382] The fifth group is devoted to the attempt at the representation of the aspirations to Kṛṣṇa by the *gopis* after waking Him up. Kṛṣṇa is informed of the the arrival of the enemies of God who have suffered much and now realized of His greatness.[383] They request Him

---

372. ibid. 5.
373. ibid. 6.
374. ibid. 7.
375. ibid. 9.
376. ibid. 10.
377. ibid. 13.
378. ibid. 14.
379. ibid. 15.
380. ibid. 16.
381. ibid. 17.
382. ibid. 18.
383. ibid. 21.

to come out of the bed room like a lion which has waken up just now and walking with a majestic style to occupy the throne and listen to their supplications.[384] All the people wish for His Feet by doing *maṅgalāsāsanam*.[385] If He were to fulfil their aspirations, they would be able to sing His prosperity and the advantage of serving Him. This would enable them to get full relief from the worldly ills and enjoy bliss.[386] In the last group, the bath which they would now undertake is justified on the strength of the practice of it by the elders. They require certain equipments for their worship of Him, namely, huge conches which would terrify the world with their resonant sound, and big musical instruments. They must have people who would do *maṅgalāsāsanam* for Him. They require also auspicious lamps, flags and canopies.[387]

The observances of a vow of this kind does not, however, get sanction from the *Vedic* sources, but certain acts have been in vogue as practices of pious and righteous men whose conduct and behaviour cannot be questioned. On the analogy of Holaka and other practices,[388] these have to be treated as authoritative. The *gopis* request the Lord to give them suitable ornaments to put on and allow them to prepare rice with milk and ghee.[389] The *gopis* exult over their good fortune for having Kṛṣṇa amidst them. They are all persons roaming in the forests tending the cows. They are utterly unlearned and Kṛṣṇa is born to live as one among them. This reveals God's *saulabhya*. The relationship between them and Kṛṣṇa is such that it can never be got rid of. This is the highest *tattva* which scholars seek to realize but is very easily known to these cowherdesses. They could have, out of ignorance and childishness, addressed Him with expressions that deserve to be used

384. ibid. 23.
385. ibid. 24
386 ibid. 25.
387. ibid. 26.
388. *Sabarabhāṣya* on *Mīmāmsā-sūtra* 1.3: 15.
389. ibid. 27.

with reference to people of low status. Tho Lord is requested to forgive them for that fault and grant their request.[390] They request the Lord to listen to the purpose of their coming to Him early in the morning in order to do *maṅgalasāsanam* at His Feet. He must accept their services. They are not the persons to be satisfied with the result they would gain from Him for the time and forget Him afterwards. They request to be related to Him intimately for all times in each and every birth of theirs. They shall do service only to Him. He shall relieve them of any thought as aspiration other than this.[391] Following the tradition of her father she offers *maṅgalāsāsanam* to the Lord.[392]

The fundamental truth preached here is that the selves live only for Nārāyaṇa Who is *Uttama*, or *Puruṣottama.*[393] While worshipping God, the deeds which are prohibited have to be given up.[394] The ultimate purpose lies in praising and worshipping His Feet and whatever is done shall be an act of service.[395]

Prapatti is the path for obtaininn final release.[396] When the devotees proceed to study the *tattva* from the preceptor, they are required to take their classmates also with them[397]. Mind is the guard of the temple of God.[398] The spiritual preceptors shall be worshipped in advance and God shall be approached through their favour.[399] Śrī shall be worshipped at first.[400] The preceptor's advice shall be followed[401] and Śrī shall be

---

390. ibid. 28.
391. ibid. 29.
392. ibid. 24.
393. Bh.G. 10
394. T. Pv. 2.
395. ibid. 3. cf. *Tiruvempāvai* 15, 16, 19; 20.
396. ibid. 12.
397. ibid. 13.
398. ibid. 16.
399. ibid. 17.
400. ibid. 18.
401. ibid. 19.

requested for Her help.[402] The Lord shall be awakened, worshipping Him Who resides as Indweller.[403] External worship (*bāhyayāga*) shall then be undertaken[404] The six instruments refer to the six seats arranged for the Lord[405] The Indweller is then worshipped[406] and this is called *anuyāga*. The way of practising *prapatti* and its effect are suggested.[407]

The Vaiṣṇavite tradition has attached great significance to the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* of Periyāḷvār and to the *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ. The worship of the deity with the recitation of the *Nālāyiram* shall begin with the first two verses of *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and end with the recitation of the last two verses of *Tiruppāvai*. The verses of *Tiruppaḷḷāṇṭu* treat of offering *maṅgaḷam* to the Feet of the Lord, Lord, Śrī and His conch and discus. It is prudent on the part of the worshipper to hope for God's vision and wish for that for all times. It is foolish to harp upon selfish ends, such as redressal of grievances and removal of miseries. The prayers shall end with an appeal to the Lord to enable the worshippers serve Him for all times. *Kaiṅkarya* is thus the sole aim and purpose of the life of a Vaiṣṇavite and it is not therefore a surprise that the compositions of Periyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ have come to occupy supreme position in the recitation of the *Nālāyiram*.

Āṇṭāḷ was born for bridal mysticism.[408] The Āḷvār-nāyakis of Tirumaṅkai Maṉṉan and Nammāḷvār with introspective *jñāna* could only wear the bridal garb and imbibe the intensity of *prema* and employ the terminology of the bride. The symbology of spiritual marriage is not different from the metaphysical language of deification by which the self is divinised by the alchemy of love. From the point of view of bridal mysticism, Āṇṭāḷ's two poems, *Tiruppāvai* and *Nacciyār-*

402. ibid. 20.
403. ibid. 21.
404. ibid. 23, 24, 25.
405. ibid. 26.
406. ibid. 27.
407. ibid. 28, 29.
408. A.H. Sūt. 133.

tirumoḷi are inspired lyrical rhapsodies which are the quintessence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpremeditated but self-concealed art. Her mystic experiences are not visionary or hallucinatory but are historic and true. Here is an inspiring example of a spiritual marriage. It is only those who have pure hearts and who have subdued the lusts of the flesh and tasted *bhakti-rasa* that can understand her supra-rational experience clothed in symbolic imagery and a sensuous garb, and appreciate the language employed by her.

Āṇṭāḷ was like the *gopī* born for Gopāla, the Divine Dark and she vowed to wed Him alone and none else.[409] In her poems there is unique poetic or dramatic gift of portrying with consummate feminine art, the procession of virgin love with her comrades with praise in her lips and *prema* in her heart to the mansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, enthroned in their hearts, wake Him up from his *yoganidra* and present to Him a petition for granting them the boon of the unitive life.[410] It should prove much more easy for her as a member of the fair sex to realize the Highest through her own route of being. It is clear that for the female of this incarnation, the path of Āṇṭāḷ shows how the transformation could be effected and the rich raptures of the supramental are open to her.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is accessible to her as Gopāla, the cowherd boy; yet He is the Dazzling Divine Dark hidden in the light of love and as the cloud of the Unknowing He is elusive, Now her poetic genius and make-believe come in her way. She imagines herself to be a *gopī* mad after Śrī Kṛṣṇa;[411] but He is a Divine Beauty which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard and the hand has not touched. The heart can know Him, but logic cannot. So Āṇṭāḷ invokes Maṉmatha, but that attempt was not fruitful. Then she tries her success by drawing an omen-circle on the sand (*kuṭal*)[412]; then she craves the

409. Nāc. Tm. 1.5; cf. ibid. 12.4.

410. T. Pv. 6 to 19.

411. Nāc. Tm. 2, 3.

412. ibid. 4. This motif has been borrowed from the *Akam* poetry of the ancient Tamils.

cuckoo to cry for her ocean-hued Lord's arrival; it is really a pathetic appeal of a love-infected girl.[413] The love-sick maiden sees-Him in her dream as if she goes wedded with Him with all ritualistic details of her marriage function.[414] When she opens her eyes the vision disappears; the joy of physical embrace fades away at the thought of Divine clasping of love. It is an amazing experience which only a born mystic like Āṇṭāḷ can feel and know. Now Āṇṭāḷ's flaming love reaches the white heat of consuming passion. There is no response to her irresistible yearning and yet she knows that her love is inescapable. So she sends messages of her burning love to her cruel-hearted Lord through the clouds to intercede on her behalf.[415] But this attempt too does not bear any fruit. So her feelings of forsakenness and frustration ends in the agony of despair[416]

Normally feminine love is meek, modest and passive but it becomes aggressive when it is not answered and when there is no mutualness or reciprocity. Her *prema* becomes irrepressible. It becomes irresistible and in its frenzy it bursts the bounds of conventional self-restraint. Despondency has its reaction in defiance and assault. The love-smitten maiden rebukes the lover for his cunning and cruelty.[417] He is a thief as He has stolen away her heart and is elusive and deceptive.[418] He is cruel and callous as He has forsaken a maid captivated by His beauty and suffering from divine posssesion and intoxication.[419] In her desperate mood, she resorts to a unique expedint of assualt which has no parallel in bridal mysticism either in the East or in the West. She pines away and seeks relief by plucking out the very roots of feminine love budding from her breast and aims them as missiles at her Torturer.[420]

413. ibid. 5.
414. ibid. 6.
415. ibid; 8.
416. ibid. 10; cf. 9 also with this
417. ibid. 13.
418. ibid. 13.2, 6; 14.3.
419. ibid. 13.1, 3,4.
420. ibid. 13.8.

The Fisher and Falconer of feminine souls Who is also seized with soul-hunger could no longer escape from the inescapable love of Āṇṭāḷ. He is pierced by the shafts of love and can no longer resist it. His yearning for contacting her, His elect bride, and enjoying her union has now reached the stage of consummation. At last heart speaks to heart and Āṇṭāḷ visualises her being led in bridal array in all pomp and splendour by the Beloved. The doors of the Sleeping Beauty of Tiruvaraṅkam are flung open. She is caught up in the Bliss of Divine Embrace and is deified.

Āṇṭāḷ's life is idealised and she is idolised in Śrī Vaiṣṇavite shrines and homes and millions of Vaiṣṇavites through the ages, particularly in South India, have worshipped her as the embodiment of the fidelity of feminine love raised to the Divine level as His eternal 'other'. Indeed St. Āṇṭāḷ stands as the most marvellous exponent of the bridal path of Mystic Attainment. The sixth decad of the *Nācciyār tirumoḻi* is now recited on the occasion of the marriage in families which are Vaiṣṇavite in outlook and conduct.

The bridal path attracted also Periyāḷvār and Kulacēkara Āḷvār whose strong inclinations were respectively motherly affection towards Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Rāma, and prompted them to indulge on this theme. Periyāḷvār has sung three decads[421] on the *gopīs*' love to Kṛṣṇa and Kulacēkarāḷvār only one decad[422] on the role of a *gopī* accusing Kṛṣṇa of several misdeeds and breaches of faith. But bridal mysticism has not taken a deep root in their hymns.

The *Upaniṣadic* seers have shown that at the back of all types of affection is the love of Self.[423] Knowing Him, one becomes attractive to all others.[424] Therefore the love-approach is not to be condemned as such. The Āḷvārs, avowedly follow the *Bhāgavata*. Their love-approach is the

---

421. Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.4; 3.7; 3.8.
422. Perum. Tm. 6.
423. Br. Up. 6(5: 6.
424. Ken. Up. 4:6.

desire for the attainment of God Kṛṣṇa, even as the *gopis* desired Him. The history of the *gopis* is the expression of their close and intimate and personal relationship with God, an intamacy possible to the supreme knowers alone. Sensual love was not an item in their approach. They were therefore considered to be *ṛṣis* come down in their real nature as women, for they were utterly dependent on God, the Primal Male. There is, however, a difference between the Āḷvārs and the *gopis*. Whereas the *gopis* were in a situation of actual physical relationship, thrown in His Society, the Āḷvārs had to gain this intimacy in and through the *arcāvatāras* of God, all over this Holy Land. They always practised the love to these *arcā* idols, invariably and without any exception. They removed the dire blot of sex and carnalism and every trace and reminiscense of these, from their love experiences. Sublimation was effected by the worship of the manifestations of God, even abandoning the historical *avatāras*, for the *arcā vigrahas* are but representations, descents actual, of the Divine. For their part Āṇṭāḷ, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and Nammāḷvār worshipped *arcā* as their Love-object and clung to it alone Their eyes saw all human beings including themselves as female; they themselves became spouse fit for the Lord. Their entire dependance on God, or feminity, was absolute, inescapable, divinely ordained from sempiternal years.

MATURAKAVIYĀḶVĀR

The piece of *Kaṇṇinuṇciṛuttāmpu* consisting of eleven verses was composed by Maturakaviyāḷvār in praise of his preceptor Nammāḷvār. The poem which is in the form of *antāti* considers not God but the spiritual teacher Nammāḷvār as the *śeṣin*. He knows no other deity. Repeating the utterance of his master's name this Āḷvār got supreme delight. He seeks only the feet of the Āḷvār. He will sing the praise of his feet.[425] It is only by being the servant of the Āḷvār that he could see God.[426] Nammāḷvār is his father, mother and

425. K.C. 2,7.
426. ibid. 3.

ruler;[427] he sang the inner sense of the *Vedas*.[428] It is out of the sincere devotion of Maturakaviyāḷvār to his preceptor this piece is to be sung before the recitation of *Tiruvāymoḷi* is undertaken. What Maturakaviyāḷvār practised is not something which was unknown to other Āḷvārs. There are numerous instances in which the other Āḷvārs extolled the greatness of *bhāgavatas* and held them as their lords.[429]

TIRUVARAṄKATTAMUTANĀR

The *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* of Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutaṉār which is included in the *Nālayiram* depicts in the *antāti* form the greatness of Rāmānuja. After a brief introduction showing how he had to compose this piece, Amutaṉār refers to the Āḷvārs and their contributions.[430] Peyāḷvār is referred to as the head among the Tamil scholars.[431] Rāmānuja is stated as cherishing what each of these Ālvārs preached and also keeping their feet on his head and getting guidance from them for his writings. This is clear proof that the writings of the Āḷvārs influenced to a large extent Rāmānuja's philosophy and particularly in writing the *Gadyatraya*. Rāmānuja is stated to have preached that the three pursuits *dharma*, *artha* and *mokṣa* are related to Vāmana and *kāma* to Kṛṣṇa.[432] It is said that the teachings of Nammāḷvār were ever in the mind of Rāmānuja and guided him.[433] Devotion to the spiritual preceptor is stressed by citing his own example of worshipping those who are devoted to Rāmānuja.[434]

The constellation *Śravaṇa* which is known as *Tiruvōṇam* in Tamil is held to be presided over by Viṣṇu and the day, when that constellation is present, is celebrated and this celebration

427. ibid. 4.
428. ibid. 9.
429. Perum. Tm. 10; T.E. 10; A.P. 1; Peri. Tm. 2.6; T.V.M. 3,7; 5.2; 8.10.
430. R.N. 8 to 19.
431. ibid. 10,
432. ibid. 40.
433. ibid. 46, 60,
434. ibid. 85, 86, 96. 97.

is in honour of Viṣṇu. The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain frequent references to the celebration of this great festival.[435] Perhaps the frequent references to this festival coupled with the *Vedic* concept of Lord Viṣṇu as the deity presiding over the constellation *Śravaṇa* are responsible for the observance of this day in each lunar month in great shrines like those at Tiruvarankam, Kāñci, Kumbakonam, Triplicane and others when the deity is taken in procession. The supreme significance of this constellation for undertaking a celebration must have been left unnoticed resulting in the celebration of it in an ordinary humdrum way.

---

435. Pēriyāl. Tm. 2.4: 1. 2.9: 7; 3.3: 9; *Tiruppāllāṇtu* 6,9; Nāṉ. Tv. 41.

THE ĀḶVĀRS AND THE WORLD

The devout men of God are also men of the world. They are also as much living a life in the material environment as others do. Some of them are fully alive to the temptations of life and sufferings of humanity. In fact, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and Toṇṭaraṭipoṭiyāḷvār had tasted the harder aspects of life. On the other hand, some Āḷvārs had, as a result of age-long experience, a subjective attitude of the worldly ills. All the same their minds were steeped in enjoying God-realization and as such avoided the allurements of the world. Whenever the worldly attractions were irresistible, they prayed to God for saving them from getting enticed by the senses. The compositions of the Āḷvārs refer frequently to these aspects of their life and on occasions, the Āḷvārs offer a bit of advice also to humanity.

"The true mystics of all ages and climes claim to have had a direct experience of God and proclaim in their joy 'come and see' and invite humanity to have similar experiences. They are free from the barries that divide one man from another and therefore extend their spiritual hospitality to others".[1] Nammāḷvār, the great mystic as he is, has immense sympathy for his fellow-beings, and occupies a pre-eminent place among God's devotees. It is he alone that starts singing for the redemption of all his fellowmen. The first song with which he opened his lips is a humble appeal for mercy for the whole mankind. Like the great *ṛṣis* of Daṇḍakāraṇya[2] who drew the attention of Rāma to the mutilated limbs of the sages of that place victimised by the Rākṣasas in order to invoke His sympathy and obtain his promise of redress. Saint Parāṅkusa draws the Lord's attention to the serious

1. *Mystics and Mysticism*, p. 428.
2. Rām Āraṇya. 6: 15, 16.

drawbacks and failings of humanity: "O Lord; Pray lend Thy ear truly to the humble petition (viṇṇappam) of mine. May *we all* (entire mankind) never more wallow in this woeful state of false knowledge, evil conduct, and filthy body[3]

The above sentiment is voiced forth by one who had never talked a word before that since his birth. Is it not a sure indication of the compassion residing in his heart for the whole of mankind?. It may be presumed that this compassion must have been his upper most thought drowning probably even the God-love that had kept him speechless for many years. The sentiment expressed in the first verse of the Āḻvār is exceptional and unique; his compassion for the suffering humanity is commensurate only with his love towards God. It can be seen that this feeling being reflected throughout his four poems, coming to the surface only now and then, but ever present there. The first word of the first verse viz., '*poy*' stands for falsehood and the last word of the last verse viz., '*uyarntē*'[4] stands for exaltation. If ever any soul migrated from falsehood to exaltation it was Nammāḻvār. Prince Siddhārtha activated by his pity and campassion for the afflicted renounced his kingdom and took to the life of a mendicant trying to find a solution to soothe and heal and became a Buddha; but he did not postulate God in his philosophy. But Saṭhakōpa, whose compassion for the erring humanity equalled, and even exceeded Buddha's indulges very frequently in heart-felt prayer to his God to help man to cast off sin, and partake of the pleasures of divine Bliss. There are indeed occasions when he bitterly complains against God and accuses Him of being selfish and self-centred and not caring for the true welfare of His created beings.[5] There are again occasions when finding that no one in the world responds to his call to come and pray, the Āḻvār becomes bitter and says things very uncomplimentary to man.[6] He says: "Let

3. T.V,R. 1.
4. T.V.M. 10. 10 : 10.
5. T.V.R. 3, 4, 13, 25, 33, 50: P. Tv. 6, 9, 15, 22: T.V.M. 1.4; 2.1; 2.4 5.3; 6.2; 8.5: 9.6.
6. T.V.M. 4.9; 7.5.

any one do anything he likes. Who can try to correct this wide and diverse world? I rejoice in the feeling that by the Grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Who is the Lord of the Eternals, I have been enabled to wipe out pain and distress from my mind".[7] But his fellow-feeling very soon asserts itself. Then we find him casting off complacency, putting in a plea once more for afflicted men and telling the Lord that it would be wrong for Him to expect men to think of Him or come to Him even to pray for succour.[8] He asks: "What stuff are they made of? Where are they situate? How can'st Thou expectest them to think of Thee, or to come to Thee for relief?"[9] The Āḻvār tries to explain by referring to the primordial sin that prevents man from even bowing his head or folding his hands in prayer;[10] and to the potency of the senses that are strong enough to assail even the Lord's chosen devotees in Paramapada - "Viṇṇuḷārpermāṟku aṭimai ceyvāraiyum cerum aimpulaṉ ivai".[11]

This alternation of feeling in the Āḻvār between sympathy for man in his distress, and disgust at man's waywardness which persists in putting God out of man's thought, word and deed, - and between prayer for his own safety and for the safety of the entire humanity - is seen even more pronounced in his *Tiruvāymoḻi*. He is even more vociferous here in his condemnation of God's indifference to human woes: "Already this wretched world is unable to concentrate on the freshness and beauty of Thy glorious Form. And to such a distraeted world Thou hast given a multitude of conflicting and mutually destructive faiths and schisms. If Thou, Who art bound to protect them, indulge in self-satisfaction, and think of nothing but the freshness and fragrance of Thy *tuḻaci* garland, willst not this world goest to ruin?"[12] That even during

---

7. P. Tv. 25.
8. ibid. 32.
9. ibid. 47.
10. ibid. 84.
11. T.V.M. 7.1:5.
12. ibid. 3.1:4.

his ecstatic moments of God-enjoyment, the saint has an eye towards afflicted humanity and never fails to shed a tear for their inability to partake of the feast of the soul he is revelling in, speaks volumes about his compassion for suffering humanity. His is a desire to share his God-enjoyment with his fellow beings. Even in the first contum he calls out to them in three decads.[13] It is noteworthy that these three decads are couched in short metre quite unlike the others which is not a mere coincidence. It must be a deliberate trick of language indulged in to invite reluctant men into the Divine fold by giving them short, but sweet advice. Be that as it may, one thing is clear : the one hundred decads of the great work of this Āḻvār are interspersed with hymns addressed to his fellowmen. Those hymns point out to them the emptiness of human life and the vanity of human wishes at times; at other times, they draw their attention to the greatness and glory of God, and to the pleasures and ecstasies derived and derivable from God-life and God-love.

There are several places in the course of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* where the Āḻvārs drows God's attention to the world. The feelings with which he does so are markedly diverse. In one hymn he dreads, shuns and abhors the world that he sees before him, and prays to God to take him away and not to show him the wicked world.[14] The Āḻvār loses himself in the thought that God combines in Himself all the contradictions known to man.[15] As a born mystic he is sustained by the love of God and he extends the hospitality of his divine experience to the whole world of *jīvas* with a view to establishing a spiritual community of devotees.

Life on earth is only for a limited period. The maximum duration, as known from the *Vedas*, is limited to one hundred years. Half of this is spent in sleep. Fifteen years of the remaining half are spent in childhood and boyhood. The rest is taken up by all kinds of sufferings such as illness,

---

13. ibid. 1.2; 1.6; 1.8.
14. T.V.M. 4.9.
15. ibid. 6.3.

hunger, old age and miseries.[16] There is however no guarantee that every individual is bound to live for one hundred years. One may die now or at a later date. People do witness that life here is not stable. Yet they have faith in life as if it would be everlasting. They are really of debased thought.[17] Until the physical frame begins to scent debility, the self does imagine that it has been always strong and formidable.[18]

Apart from the desire to live for long, there is the attraction of sex which creates a self-complacent attitude that man enjoys the company of women and that the pleasurable situation in which he is placed could not be taken away from him at any time. Personal experience teaches man, however, that there sets in both physical and mental debilities.[19] Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār recollects with much remorse how he lost the occasions for rendering service to God by being lured into the company of women.[20] When the eyes roll with rheum and the man is affected by consumption, the women who were sweet in their utterances to him, ask him to go away gently. Such women would join together and laugh at him and ask him why he was coming to them coughing. They may laughingly tell him 'Don't come to see us in this condition'. The women, whose slender waists fascinated him before, would scorn at him and shut the door against his face. They, whose eyes were once bewitching him and uttered sweet words to him will now jeer at him. They, whose sexual passions were uncontrollable, now suppress them and refer to him as wicked and old. He who was fondled as cupid is now treated as decrepit. Such are the situations which a man of voluptuousness will have to face.[21] Therefore the Āḷvārs warn

---

16. T.M. 3; cf. Bhartṛhari: *Vairāgyaśatakam* (v. 10) for a similar description.
17. Tc. V. 66: cf. English rendering of this verse: "Living beings enter the abode of Yama every day. Those who remain behind wish to live permanently. What is more wonderful than this?".
18. cf. T.M. 6.
19. T.M. 5.
20. ibid. 33; cf. ibid. 16.
21. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.4.

people not to get attracted by women. They are requested to think of the evils that lie in the path of material life and pray to God for protection before they are deceived by women and they are still in sound health.[22] The diseases eat away the body. The relatives press him when he is disabled to tell them where his possessions lie. The senses and limbs gradually fail to function. People begin to cry in distress all round.[23] In addition to the residues of past experiences, there is the danger of man falling an easy prey to bad company. To this evil group belong those who mistake the unreal for the real and *vice versa* and who are lascivious. Food and clothing alone form their pursuit.[24]

The Āḷvārs appear to enjoin a code of conduct for themselves as it were. They would not aspire to have the wealth of another, nor would they make friends with the wicked.[25] They would only think of God, worship Him and his devout men. The Āḷvārs therefore appeal to their mind[26] and also to the people to worship God.[27] According to them the Ascent to the Absolute starts with purified and moral state.[28] They speak of the removal of faults, the removal of angry mind, the false sense of prestige and vain desire. They also refer to the necessity of conquerring or transmuting the passions. The devotees are describad as those whose mind has become calm and is without any blemish.[29] Their company therefore gives acme of divine bliss to these saints.[30] God is pleased with the character and behaviour of such devotees who are capable of worshipping His Feet. Therefore the Aḷvārs always desire the company of goodmen, – the *bhāgavatas* – the devotees of God who in their opinion can influence to a great deal their life and conduct.

---

22. T.M. 2.
23. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.5; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 7.
24. Perum. Tm. 3.
25. cf. M. Tv. 64 to 67.
26. Peri. Tm. 1.5; 3.9; M. Tv. 48; I. Tv. 41.
27. ibid. 11.6; T.V.M. 2.10; 4.10.
28. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; T.V.M. 3.8; 4.9; 7.1.
29. T.V.M. 8.10: 9, 10.
30. ibid. 8.10 : 7.

The Āḷvārs were imbued with sympathetic outlook for humanity but were not men who were to mix up freely with the sufferers and live amidst them. The devotional element was preponderant in their lives and as such they either went into deep meditation or moved from place to place visising the sacred shrines. The knowledge of the sufferings in the world which they had is found suggested or described in their poems when they became aware of the limitations set to their enjoyment of God's presence. Then they appealed to God to free them from such restrictions enabling them to have supreme bliss without any hindrance. On occasions, they appealed to their minds not to return to the worthless atmosphere of material prosperity and advised people to forsake the worldly pleasures for taking to a better and healthier way of life which would lead to eternal prosperity. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār, Toṇṭaraṭi-poṭiyāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār had much to contribute by way of advice to people. The Āḷvārs are not thus either spiritual preceptors or *ācāryas* or reformers imbued with the zeal to enforce ethical codes on people. They did not have a band of disciples whom they could train or a host of followers who carry out their injunctions. They were more poets to sing of the glory of the Divine, leaving the task of leading the people in the right direction to those who were prepared to work towards that end.

THE NĀLĀYIRAM AS DRAVIDA VEDA

The compositions of the Āḷvārs contain references to the *Vedas*[1] and to God as known or proved by the *Vedas*.[2] The *Vedas* go after Him searching Him[3] who expounded them.[4] Several places where are situated the sacred shrines are described as inhabited by those who are well studied in the *Vedas*[5] and as resounding with the recitation of the *Vedas*.[6] This is a clear proof to show that the Āḷvārs came in the line of *Vedic* tradition which they followed and recorded in their compositions.

It is from the composition of Maturakaviyāḷvār that the worth of Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi* is known as valuable and great as that of the *Vedas*. Nammāḷvār is stated here to have sung in sweet Tamil the thousand verses which represent the contents of the *Vedas*.[7] The inner sense of the *Vedas* is fully brought out by him.[8] This evidence comes from one who was the immediate disciple of Nammāḷvār whom he served and by whom was taught the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the other three compositions

---

1. Peri. Tm. 5.5: 9; 7.7: 2; T.V.M. 8.3: 2.
2. ibid. 5.6: 1; 8.4: 1; 8.10: 1; 11.8: 9; T.V.M. 1.6: 2: 1.8: 10; 2.7: 2; 2.9: 8; 3.1: 10; 3.3: 5; 3.4: 6; 3.5: 5; Tc. V.14, 117; Nac. Tm. 4: 10: 10: 2; Nāṉ. Tv. 13 etc.
3. ibid. 4.1: 6; 4.8: 3,7.
4. T.V.M. 2.10: 10; I. Tv. 48.
5. Peri. Tm. 2.10; 10; 3.8: 4; Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 1: T.V.M. 5.7: 9; 10.8: 10.
6. ibid. 3.10: 5; T.V.M. 5.9: 3; 7.3: 1,4.
7. K.C. 8.
8. ibid. 9.

Nāthamuni was virtually responsible for the spread of the *Nālāyiram* and for making its recitation obligatory both in the temples and houses. In the Sanskrit *taṉiyañ* which he composed in honour of Maturakaviyāḷvār, he refers to this Āḷvār as deriving delight only by the simple recitation of the *Upaniṣads* of Nammāḷvār. He was the beginner of the tradition which declares the compositions of Nammāḷvār as *Upaniṣads*. In the Tamil *taṉiyaṉ* about the same Āḷvār, he refers to the Āḷvār as Saṭhkopa who rendered the *Veda* into Tamil: 'Vētam Tamiḷ ceyta Māṟaṉ'. In the *taṉiyaṉ* to the *Tiruvāymoḷi* he refers to the work as the ocean of *Drāvida Veda* comparable to the *Upaniṣad* which has thousand recensions. The *Sāma-veda* is spoken of as having thousand recensions. The *Upaniṣad* which is attached to this *Veda* is the *Chāṇḍogya* and Nāthamuni's stand is that the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is a Tamil rendering of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad.* It is obvious from this that in Nāthamuni's opinion, the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is an *Upaniṣad* and that too of the *Sāma-veda.*

According to Īśvaramuni, the son of Nātamuni, Nammāḷvār rendered the *Vedas* into the *antāti* type of Tamil.[9] Rāmānuja states that the *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār contains in entirety the import of the *Vedas*.[10] Among the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja, Anantāḷvāṉ held that Saṭhakōpa composed the *Veda* in Tamil.[11] Aruḷāḷap-perumāḷ Emperumāṉār refers to Nammāḷvār as having composed *Tiruvāciriyam* in *āciriyappā* metre and as the expounder of the *Vedās*.[12] Parācara Paṭṭar refers to the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as *Tamil Veda* in thousand verses[13] and as the music of the *Veda*.[14] The same scholar describes Āṇṭāḷ as preaching through the *Tiruppāvai* the *śeṣavṛtti* that is taught in the *Upaniṣads*. This last reference has much significance in as much as the *Tiruppāvai*

9. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'tiruvaluti-nāṭu.,
10. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'cīrār'.
11. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'ēynta'.
12. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'kāciṉiyōr'.
13. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'vāṉ-tikaḷum'.
14. Taṉiyaṉ beginning with 'mikka iṟai'.

does form part of the *Tamil Vedas.* In addition, it is the cream of the *Vedas,* as what is taught through *Vedānta* is taught in this piece.

The *Ārāyirap-paṭi* of Piḷḷāṉ is extolled by Maṇavaḷamāmuṉikaḷ as conveying the import of Nammāḷvār's *Veda*[15]. Vedānta Deśika refers to the Āḷvār as having rendered the *Vedas* into Tamil.[16] Nāthamuni is said to have taught the *Tamil Vedas* in musical setting.[17] Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār makes frequent references to the *Tamil Veda.* Poykaiyāḷvār wrote in pure Tamil about the purport of the *Vedas.*[18] So also did Tiruppāṇāḷvār[19] and so was strung a garland of *Tamil Veda* by Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār.[20] The imports of the *Vedas* which are beyond the reach of the people were brought out by Saṭhakopa in thousand sweet Tamil verses.[21] Rāmānuja had thc realization of the import of the *Vedas* composed by Nammāḷvār.[22] Through Rōmānuja's services, the *Vedas* which reveal Nārāyaṇa became delighted and the pure *Tamil Vedas* composed by Nammāḷvār continued to flourish.[23] What is noteworthy here is that eminent scholars of the *Vedas* like Periyāḷvār[24] and Maturakaviyāḷvār composed hymns in Tamil in praise of God andĀḷvār respectively. Vedānta Deśika refers to the preceptors as holy (*bhagavāṉ*) who are proficient in the *Tamiḷ Vedas.*[25] He calls the composition of Nammāḷvār '*samhita*', a word which is widely used to refer to the *Vedic* texts.[26]

15. U.R.M. 41.
16. *Guruparamparā-sāra* verse 2 (Tamil).
17. ibid. last verse.
18. R.N. 8.
19. ibid. 11.
20. ibid. 13.
21. ibid. 18.
22. ibid. 46.
23. ibid. 54.
24. The very title 'Paṭṭar' shows that Viṣṇu-cittar was a vedic scholar and the author of commentary on the *Kalpasūtra.* One of the passages in his compositions suggests his acquaintance with the *Pūrvamīmāia* rules (Vide: RTS p.545)
25. R.T.S. p. 523.
26. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali,* p.4. ef. *Pādukāsahśra* 1 : 3.

It is thus noticed that after Nāthamuni, the *Nālāyirām* became reputed as *Tamil Vedas* and the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the *Upaniṣad* in Tamil. The two works *Drāmidopaniṣat-sāra* and *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali* which are in brief the sum and substance of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* lend support to this tradition of thought. This shows at the same time that the other three compositions of Nammāḷvār as also those of other Āḷvārs were treated simply as the *Vedas*.

The first twenty-one verses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* convey clearly the purport of the Vedānta system. They represent the twenty-one recensions of the *Ṛg Veda*. The thousand verses which are set to music represent the *Sāma-veda* teachings in thousand recensions. The hundred decads represent the *Yajur-veda* which has one hundred recensions. This composition abounds in the delineation of the eight sentiments and so represents the *Atharva-veda* which has eight recensions. Hence the *Tiruvāymoḷi* shall be taken to represent all the *Vedās*.[27] This is only an attempt to justify that the Āḷvār's composition *Tiruvāymōḷi* is *Tamil Veda*.

Curiously enough, attempts were made, in this period to declare that the *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, *Periya-tiruvantāti* and *Tiruvāymoḷi* represent the essential teachings respectively of *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Atharva* and *Sāma Vedas*.[28] This identification does not stand to reason. The *Tiruviruttam*, which is the first work of Nammāḷvār, begins with a reference to the worldly sufferings and a request to God for listening to his humble petition for rendering service at His Feet. The work shall rather be taken to contain the incidents which take place in life, in order to get freed from repeating them. The name '*Tiruvāciriyam*' refers to composition in *āciriyap-pā* metre. It represents the supremacy of Narayana and His glory. *Periya-tiruvantāti*, which is composed in the *antāti* scheme and in *veṇpā* merte, depicts the *parama-bhakti* of the Āḷvār and it is for this reason that the word '*periya*' which

---

27. *Drāmidopaniṣat-tātparyaratṉāvali*, 5 cf. ibid., 10.
28. Vide : A.H. Sūt. 50: U.R.M. 9; The printed texts contain references of this kind at the beginning of these compositions.

means 'big' is used as the adjective here. The fourth composition, the *magnum opus* of this Āḷvār, is *Tiruvāymoḷi* which is not merely an utterance that issues out of the mouth but is great and supreme and hence has the adjective '*tiru*' being prefixed to it.

On the contrary, any attempt at establishing parity between these four compositions and the four *Vedas* would only lead to confusion. The *Vedas* as such could be interpreted as expression of the Lord's greatness, and in that sense alone these four compositions and those of all other Āḷvārs could be deemed as the *Vedas*. Too much has been made of the fact that Nammāḷvār's compositions number four, and also the fact that Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's number six, so that an equation is sought between the four *Vedas* and Nammāḷvār's four works and similarly between the six "*Vedāṅgas*"[29] and the six works of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. The two *Maṭals* or the *Tāṇṭakams* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār have nothing in common with any of these nor could *Periya-tirumoḷi* be identified with any of them. The *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* is more a *citrabhanda* than an ordinary piece and does not have any comparison to *śikṣas* or *chandas*. Moreover, there is no justification to treat these six compositions as auxiliaries to the four compositions of Nammāḷvār. It is idle to play on the 'number' of these compositions and try to connect them with the *Vedas* and their auxiliaries. Moreover, it remains to be explained as to what place the compositions of the other Āḷvārs would occupy among the *Vedic* texts. When these two sets of these compositions exhaust the comparison with the *Vedas* and their auxiliaries, the other compositions should either cease to be designated as *Vedas* or given some other names such as *Upa-Vedas*. All these attempts would lead to draw unjust and invidious distinctions among the compositions of the Āḷvārs. The proper procedure that deserves to be adopted is to admit the tradition that has been handed down from Nāthamuni and to treat the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as an *Upaniṣad* of

29. The ancilliaries are six in number viz., phonetics (śikṣa), grammar (vyākaraṇa), prosody (chandas), etymology (nirukti), astronomy (jyotiṣa) and ceremonial texts (kalpa).

the *Sāma-veda*, the composition being based on the same number of recensions of the *Sāma-veda* and that of verses in the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. The remaining compositions in the *Nālāyiram* represent the *Vedas* as such. There is no need to mark out some of them as identical with a particular *Veda* nor is it proper to treat the other three compositions of Nammāḷvār as other three *Vedas*.

The traditional commentators and exponents simply held that the four thousand verses of the Āḷvārs are the Tamil renderings of the purport of the four *Vedas*.[30] It was suggested by Vedānta Deśika, in the context of maintaining the parity between the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the *Vedas*, that this composition of Nammāḷvār represents the essence of the four *Vedas*.[31] All the commentators of the *Divya Prabandham* as a whole or in part have recognized that Nammāḷvār composed the four compositions in the order of *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, *Periga-tiruvantāti* and *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[32]

Nāthamuni refers to the *Tiruvāymaḷi* as the ocean of *Tamil Veda* which is comparable to the *Upaniṣad* of *Sāma-veda*. The basis for maintaining this comparison is not hard to seek. The *Vedānta* system, which is based on the Sanskrit sources, is said to have triple foundations *(prasthāna-traya)* of which the *Brahma-sūtras* formed the chief subject of study and exposition. These *sūtras* which were compiled by Vyāsa represent the authentic exposition of the philosophical inquiry of the tenets of the *Vedānta* school following a particular order in the treatment. These *sūtras* were prepared following the traditions maintained in the *Sāma-veda*.[33] Neverthless, they became the foundations of the *Vedānta* traditions for the followers of all the branches of the *Vedas*. This is evident from the larger number of citations made by the exponents of these *sūtras* from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* than from any others. That these *sūtras* were

30. T.P. 384.
31. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali* 5, 8.
32. ibid. 126.
33. Belwalker, S.K.: *Vedānta Philosophy* (Poona, 1929); p. 141.

adopted by the followers of other *Vedas* as well is clear from the profuse citations made from the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka, Taittirīya, Aitareya* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads* which belong respectively to the *Suklayajur-veda, Kṛṣṇayajur-veda, Ṛg-veda* and *Atharva-veda* not to speak of many other *Upaniṣads* like the *Śvetāśvatara* and others. Besides these, relevant passages are cited from the *Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of the *Vedas, Bhagavad-gītā, Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and others showing thus, all these sources of knowledge represent a unified whole. Yet the fact remains that the essence of the teachings of the *Brahma-sūtras* belongs to the *Sāma-veda.* It is in this light that Nāthamuni should have treated the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the *Upaniṣad* of the *Sāma-veda.* Maturakaviyāḷvār who was a follower of the *Sāma-veda,* declares that Nammāḷvār had brought out the full import of the *Vedas.* Nāthamuni and Maturakavi are not really contradicting each other, as what is taught in the *Sāma-veda* is also conveyed by other *Vedas* and their *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedāntins* did not find any discrepancy in citing freely the passages from more than one *Veda* and one *Upaniṣad* to support an interpretation in the same context. Perhaps the recent attempt as establishing the parity of the four compositions of Nammāḷvār with the four *Vedas* represents over-shooting the mark, revealing the zeal to reconcile the statements of Maturakaviyāḷvār and Nāthamuni.

The outpouring of the heart mellowed by the deep sensuous realization of the *arcā* form of the deities at Tirumāliruñcolai, Tirukkuruṅkuṭi and other places, the sudden outburst of the mental anguish caused by severe disappointment at the loss of the divine communion and the contemplative expressions at the dizzy heights of the Lord's eminence and His descents providing easy accessibility to the suffering mankind were experiences discontinuously had by Nammāḷvār with the result that there is not found in this composition the sequential treatment of these experiences. It is therefore apt to maintain a likeness between the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* or for that matter any other *Upaniṣad* or even the *Veda* which contain various currents of thoughts which are not presented in a particular order. It is therefore

all the more appropriate to refer to Nammāḻvār as a seer[34] like the seers of the *mantras*. Hence the *Tiruvāymoḻi* can both be a *Samhitā* and an *Upaniṣad*.

The commentaries and the sub-commentaries of Piḷḷāṉ and others on the *Tiruvāymoḻi* containing profuse citations from the epics and *Purāṇas* bear comparison to the *Bhāṣyās* on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedas*. As in the sphere of the *Vedic* studies, here too there are differences in interpretation noted within the frame of Vaiṣṇavism.

The *Brahma-sūtras* represent the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* in an orderly manner. In the light of this treatment, it is possible to find out a systematic presentation of the Vaiṣṇavite doctrines from the *Nāiāysram*. The relevant passages are scattered all through the *Tiruvyāmoḻi* and other compositions of the Āḻvārs. Following the doctrines preached in the *Jitāntaśtotra*, *Mahābhārata*, *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and other sources, the Āḻvārs recognized Brahman as the Supreme Person, Nārāyana with Śrī.[35] He has unsurpassed bliss[36] and is the abode of unlimited auspicious qualities. He has the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things as His body.[37] He is everything.[38] Nothing is beyond Him.[39] He is superior to Brahmā and Śiva[40] and has none as His equal or superior.[41] He is the Supreme Light.[42] He has a body golden in com-

---

34. *Pādukāsahasra*, 1.3:
35. Mū. Tv. 1 and Nāṉ. Tv. 54.
36. T.V.M. 1.1: 1.
37. R.V. 1. 115: 1 and T.V.M. 1.1: 1; Br. Up. 5.9: 28 and T.V.M. 1.1: 2.
38. cf. Ch. Up. 3.14: 1 and T.V.M. 1.1: 4; 1.1: 7; 1.3: 9; 2.6: 10: 3.4: 10; 3.10: 10. 8.1: 6, 7; I.Tv. 24, 31; M. Tv. 89: Nāṉ. Tv. 51, 56, 96; Tc. V. 86, 94; Peri. Tm. 5.10: 1; 9.4: 10.
39. cf. Muṇ. Up. 1.1: 7 and T.V.M. 1.1: 10.
40. cf. Sv. Up. 6: 7 and T.V.M. 1.1: 1; 8.1: 5.
41. Sv. Up. 3: 9; 6: 8 and T.V.M. 1.2; 1.3: 2: M. Tv. 89; and Nāṉ. Tv. 51, 56.
42. *Taitt. Nārayaniya 93* and T.V.M. 3.7: 1; cf. Ch. Up. 8.3: 4 and T.V.M. 3.1: 2; T.K. 12.

plexion[43] and his eyes resemble the lotus.[44] He is the creator af all,[45] being the prime cause for everything.[46] Though the created world is not different from Him, He is not in the least tainted by its impurities.[47] He has full control over everything[48] and is the Indweller of the sentient beings[49] and the inanimate world which He pervades fully.[50]

Nārāyaṇa bestows on the selves right knowledge[51] which becomes progressively devotion unto Him. This shows that the self and knowledge cannot be identical [52] He is the Lord of all created beings which establishes that He is distinct from them which also have difference among themselves.[53] The word '*cuṭar*'[54] suggests that the lustrous frame which lends radiance to others could not be screened by anything, let alone nescience. It is also suggested in some of the verses that certain doctrines which are held by certain schools of

---

43. Ch. Up. 1.6: 6 and T.V.M. 2.5: 1.
44. ibid. 1.6: 7 and T.V.M. 3.7: 1.
45. cf. Sv. Up. 6: 9 and Tc. V. 1: He is the creator of Brahmā and Rudra also. Nārāyaṇīya Up. 1. and T.V.M. 8.1: 11; Nāṉ. Tv. 1.
46. This shows that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the world. cf. Ch. Up. 6.8: 1 and T.V.M. 1.9: 1; Br Up. 3 4: 1, 17 and T.V.M. 1.5: 2, 5; 2.8: 5; 10. 10: 8. Creation, maintenance and destruction are also meant by this. cf. Ch. Up. 3. 14: 1.
47. Kath. Up. 2.5. 11 and T.V.M. 3.4: 10; cf Ch. 6.8: 1; 3.14: 1; *Suklayajur-veda : Śāntipatha;* and T.V.M. 1.1: 6; 1.1: 10; 1.5. 2; 3.4: 10; 7.6: 1; 10.5: 3; 10. 7: 2.
48. cf. Taitt. Up 2: 8; and T.V.R. 5.
49. Br. Up. 3.7: 11; Taitt. Ar. 3. 11 and T.V.M. 8.1: 5; 10. 5: 3. He has also the forms of Brahmā, Rudra and Indra cf. Nārāyaṇīya Up. 10.1 and T.V.M. 8.8 : 11; 9.3 : 2; 1.1: 7. Etymologically the word 'nārāyana' is apt to represent Brahman of T V.M. 1.2. 10; 1.3: 7.
50. cf. Taitt. Up. 2.7 and T.V,M. 1.1 : 7.
51. cf. T.V.M. 1.1: 1.
52. This is the rejection of Sāṅkhya view.
53. The world cannot therefore be illusory. Differences shall persist, as otherwise, the worldly process which goes on through mutual differences and variations among the animate and inanimate groups could not be explained.
54. This is an attempt to reject the theory of the Advaitins that though Brahman is self-luminous, it is screened by māyā.

thought could not be maintained. They are: (i) An effect cannot be pre-existent in the cause and cannot be produced anew;[55] (ii) the world is a void;[56] (iii) Brahmā and Rudra and others could also be supreme deities on a par with Viṣṇu[57] and (iv) Brahmā and self become identical during the period of release.[58] These may be taken to represent the contents of the second chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras*. It is thus proved that the position of Brahmā itself and in relation to the world stands un-contradicted.[59]

Brahman is to be known only through the *Vedas*[60] which however do not reach Him as He is beyond thought and description by words.[61] Knowledge of reality is necessary for obtaining *mokṣa*[62] and this reality is only the Supreme Person. Since He alone would choose the self which He desires to favour,[63] the self should realise that through devotion unto Him, it could win His favour. When He reveals Himself, the latter's experience of Him is as delectable as nectar.[64] As this does not lie within the capacity of the selves, self-surrender[65] is the easiest means which a self could adopt. All this is dealt with in the third chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The path called *acirāti-mārga*[66] which is dealt with in

---

55. This is Ārambhavāda of the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika schools. This is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1 : 11.
56. This Sūnyavāda of the Buddhists which is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1 : 9.
57. The doctrine of Tirimūrtti gets emphasis in the Purāṇas and this is contradicted in T.V.M. 4.10 : 1.
58. This is the Advaita doctrine which is contradicted in T.V.M. 8.8 : 9.
59. This is the position arrived at in Ch. 1 and 2 of the *Brahma-sutras*.
60. *Nārāyaṇa* Up. 94; T.V.M. 1.7 : 1.
61. Taitt. Up. 2.3 : 8; Peri. Tm. 4.1 : 6
62. Sv. Up. 3 : 8; T.V.M 1.7 : 1.
63. Kath Up. 1.2 : 23; cf. T.V.M. 2.3 : 1; 2.5 : 1; 5.5 : 1; 6.5 : 3, 7.7 : 1.
64. Br. Up. 4.5 : 14; and T.V.M. 2.5 : 9; 10 10 : 11.
65. *Nārāyaṇa* Up. 148.
66. T.V.M. 10.9 : 1; 1.3 : 11; 10.9 : 9; P. T.M.L. Kan. 16; C. T.M L. Kan. 7; Peri. Tm. 4.9 : 3; Tc. V. 67; cf. Ch. Up. 4.15 : 5.

the fourth chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras* is explained in greater detail by the Āḷvārs. During the period the self is to live here, it shall refrain from following the material ends and get detachment from them.[67] It shall ever entertain a keen desire to get release.[68] The released souls see Him for ever in the Paramapada [69]

Some *Vedic* scholars took objection to the study and recitation of the verses composed in languages other than Sanskrit The following are the grounds on which their objection is based: (i) The languages other than Sanskrit are not sacred and so do not deserve a special status for composing prayers. (ii) If these languages are used for spiritual purposes, women and *sūdras*, who are forbidden the study of the *Vedas*, would learn these compositions and use them for holy purposes. (iii) The *Tiruvāymoḷi* was composed by Nammāḷvār who was born in the *sūdra* caste and as such what he composed shall not be studied or recited by the brahmins. The Āḷvār's composition could not be the source for gaining knowledge about Brahman. (iv) Unlike the *Vedas*, these verses could be understood only by people who live in a particular region where Tamil is spoken and understood. (v) Even though those who are qualified to study the *Vedas* but do not do so, take to these compositions. (vi) These compositions speak about love *(kāma)* which is opposed to the teachings of the *Vedas* and *Śmṛtis*. (vii) Lastly, these works speak of *kaivalya* which is said to be the *puruṣārtha*.

Nañcīyar, who noted down these objections, cites a verse from the *Matsya-purāṇa*[70] referring to Kaiśīka and others who sang in different languages He notes that in the same context Yama is reported to have declared that recitation is only of those verses which do not deal with God. Nañcīyar adds that if because what is written in a particular language is to be rejected, then what is written in Sanskrit

67. Ch. Up. 8.15:1 and T.V.M. 10.6:1.
68. Kaṭh. Up. 1.1:26 and T.V.M. 4.1:1.
69. Taitt Sam. 1.3:6.2 and T.V.M. 5.10:11.
70. *Liṅga-purāṇa*, 2.3: 43, 44.

could also be rejected with the result that the Sanskrit language could be given up. The Āḷvārs composed these compositions in Tamil in order that even women and *sūdras* could make use of them for prayers. Though born in the *sūdra* caste, Nammāḷvār received the Grace of God and therefore became possessed of the real nature of *tattva*, *hita* and *puruṣārtha* and so was qualified to deal with philosophical matters. He is thus superior to Vidura, Śabari and others. Those who had attained much proficiency in literatures in other languages like Sanskrit appreciate these compositions. The words '*vedana*' and '*upāsana*' which are mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*, mean devotion which the *Tiruvāymoḷi* refers to as *kāma*. *Aiśvarya* and *kaivalya* are rejected in these compositions as the results got through them are little and unstable. These compositions cite the *Vedas* as evidences for the doctrines that they preach.[71]

Vedānta Deśika[72] without reference to this objection, states that the songs composed in languages other than Sanskrit are commendable. The following are the reasons stated in this connection: (i) The Lord Nārāyaṇa is dealt with in these compositions. (ii) In accordance with the statement,[73] that the Lord is to be worshipped as if He were a youthful king, intoxicated elephant or a dear guest, He is to be worshipped as a king. This means that the servants could use their own languages while attending upon the king who becomes delighted with their service. The language that is used here is of no consequence. (iii) The Tamil language was devised and developed by Agastya. The members of all the castes could make use of this language. Like the epics and *purāṇas* which are supplementary to the *Vedas*, the *samhitā* of Saṭhakōpa reigns supreme in this respect and is superior to them. That is, it offers a splendid exposition of the purport of the *Vedas*. It is further said by the same author[74] that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted,

71. *Nine Thousand*, pp. 36–37.
72. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali*, 4.
73. *Sāṇḍilya Śmṛti* 4: 31.
74. *Satsampradāya Parisuddhi*, pp. 35–36.

if necessary that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted, if necessary that being helpful in the better understanding of the *Vedāntic* truths.

The fact that could be gathered from the stand taken by Nañcīyar and Vedānta Deśika on the place of the *Nālāyiram* is that the compositions of the Āḷvārs are based on the teachings of the *Vedas.* They are thus not preaching anything which could be considered as antagonistic to the *Vedic* truths. These works contain references to the *Vedas* and to some recensions[75] as well and so are to be considered as expositions of the *Vedic* teachings in a different medium, namely, Tamil. They are certainly intended for the use of women and *sūdras* who are forbidden the study of the *Vedas* and for those who inhabit the Tamil Nad and who know the Tamil language. The epics and *purāṇas* are supplements to the *Vedas.* In a similar way, these shall be considered as the supplements of the *Vedas.* They are not the *Vedas* themselves but are *Vedas* in Tamil in so far as they serve the purposes which the *Vedas* serve. Many a matter whose source could not be traced to the *Vedas* were visualized by the sages, namely, Āḷvārs and dealt with in these compositions and as such they have come to be treated as the *Vedas* themselves. For instance, the worship of the *arcā* form of God, and devotion to God and to the devotees of God are dealt with in the *purāṇas,* but they were brought to the people at large only by the Āḷvārs The doctrine of self-surrender though traceable to the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas,* became popular only through the compositions of the Āḷvārs. The greatness of the *Veda* lies in its being the store house of knowledge which is not available through any other means. That is, the *Vedas* became the supreme authority as a source book of knowledge about ultimate truths. Similarly, these matters which have attained popularity only through the *Nalayiram* justify the compositions of the Āḷvārs to get the appellation of the *Vedas.*

A perusal of the life accounts of the Āḷvārs would reveal the fact they were mystics who composed these poems

75. Peri. Tm. 3.4:1.

merely through inspiration. It is not made clear how they were able to divine the ultimate truth and present it in a wonderful manner. To this extent, they could be treated as the seers *(dṛṣṭa)* like the *Vedic* seers. The eternal truths are presented by the seers either through the *Vedas* or through these Tamil compositions.

After the period of Nāthamuni, one and the same scholar had deep grounding in the *Vedānta* and Sanskrit sources and that is based on the *Tiuvāymoḻi.* The highlight of the adoption of this kind of training is found in the *Ubhaya Vedānta* concept which was anterior to Rāmānuja in origin and secures on reliable evidence, to have been held as a title by Tirumalai Nampi.[76] Vedānta Deśika held it to be his proud privilege for calling himself as the follower of the *Tamil Veda*,[77] as he would claim to be the follower of the branch of the *Veda.* A further result of this training lies in the traditional study of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* with commentaries, as one of the four texts[78] taken up for spiritual study under a preceptor. Further, the *Nālāyiram* is studied from the preceptor as the *Veda*. Rāmānuja, as we know, had the *adhyayana* of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* at the feet of Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷ Araiyar and had the exposition at the feet of Tirumālaiyāṇṭān.

The concept of *Ubhaya-Vedānta* was only in so far as the study and realization of the ultimate Reality. Like the *Vedānta* among the *Vedic* texts, *Tiruvāymoḻi* is more popular among the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Yet, like the *Veda* of a particular recension, the entire compositions of all the Āḻvārs have importance in the scheme of spiritual training of the Vaiṣṇavites. Hence those who have studied these compositions of the Āḻvārs are called *'Tamil Maṟaiyōr'*.[79]

---

76. *Yatirāja Vaibhava*, 1
77. T.P. 384. *'cantamīku Tamiḻ Maṟaiyōn'*.
78. The other three are: (i) *The Rahaśya-granthas*, (ii) *Bhagavad-gītā Bhāṣya*, rnd (iii) *Śrī Bhāṣya*.
79. cf. R.T.S. Ch. 5. *'Maṟainūl tantaveṭiyārē'*.

POST-ĀḺVĀR PERIOD

SUMMARY

In this section it is shown how the religion and philosophy of the Āḻvārs were formulated by the Acāryas and how the gospel of the saints had been kept alive. From Nāthamuni up to Vedānta Deśika on the one hand and Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ on the other it is shown, with reference to the sources in the relevant texts and their commentaries, how these Ācāryas and their disciples and followers have promoted the Āḻvār cult

It was Nāthamuni who arranged for the recitation of the compositions in temples and in private worship and also composed introductory verses called *'taṉiyaṉs'* to certain compositions, which tradition was followed by his successors for other compositions. The establishment of Ācārya cult, the installation of niches and temples for the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas, the writing of commentaries for the Āḻvārs' compositions and the writing of the original works on the Āḻvārs' poems by way of explanation or elucidation have helped the propagation of the cult. The contributions of Uyyakkoṇṭār, Maṇakkāl Nampi, Āḷavantār and his six important disciples and Rāmānuja have kept alive the tradition of learning the compositions of the Āḻvārs.

It is also shown how Rāmānuja had fulfilled the desires of Āḷavantār who had laid down the

fundamentals of Viśiṣṭādvaita, how he was fully equipped by his six preceptors who were the important disciples of Āḷavantār, how he took special interest in placing the *Nālāyiram* on an equal footing with the *Vedas* and also how the Āḷvārs' poems had helped him in writing his works

Further it is also pointed out how Rāmānuja established Ācārya dioceses with pious householders who were his disciples as their heads to popularise *Vaiṣṇavism* and its philosophy with the zeal of missionarise and how his followers like Kūrattāḷvān, Anantāḷvāṉ, Piḷḷāṉ, Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ, Kiṭāmpi Accāṉ, Yajñamūrtti, Vaṅkipurattu Nampi, Piḷḷaittirunaṟaiyūr Araiyar, Empār, Parācara Paṭṭar and others have kept the mantle of Āḷvār cult burning by their composing of '*taṉiyaṉs*' for the poems of the Āḷvārs and by their expositions of the *Prabandhams* regularly in temples and other places, and how those expositions have become to stay as permanent commentaries in certain cases are discussed here briefly. It is also shown how the two schools of *Vaiṣṇavism* arose for the propagation of the compositions of the Āḷvārs after the death of Rāmānuja with two conflicting sets of works, two *Guruparamparas* which give two different accounts of Rāmānuja's successors and their achievements and also the probable causes which give rise to this schism. It is further pointed out how Vedānta Deśika as a representative of *Vaṭakalai* sect had flooded the Vaiṣṇavite world with his copious writings of many forms of religious literature in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit for the propagation of the Āḷvār cult and how Piḷḷai Lōkācāryar as a representative of the

Tenkalai school had produced an appreciable quantum of works in the field for the same purpose. It is shown also how an attempt was made to depict the lives of Āḷvārs and Ācāryas in the form of epic as in the case of *Divyasūri-caritam* and to recount the tradition of *Vai avism* as in the case of *Prapann-āmṛtam* and *Aricamaya-tipam* according to the sources available to the authors of these works. The eighteen points of difference between the two sects of Vaiṣṇavism have received some brief discussion here.

How the impact of the *Nālāyiram* as their basic text had a powerful influence and appeal to the exponents of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta is indicated here and how this sacred anthology provided the basis of a speculative philosophy and how it bridged the gulf between day-to-day life and religion have been pointed out. It is further shown that the influence of the *Nālāyiram* on temple worship is unique in that in no Vaiṣṇavite shrine in the South, the daily routine worship and the during the days of festivals are conducted without the recitation of portions or whole of one or more compositions of the Āḷvārs. The recitation of the *Nālāyiram* before the deity in procession and on twenty days in the month of *Mārkaḷi* (December–January), the singing of *Tirup-pāvai* and *Tiruppaḷḷi-eḻucci* during *Mārkaḷi* month and of '*Vāraṇamāyiram*' during marriages illustrate the influence of these compositions on society.

Even in the days of Rāmānuja it was felt the necessity of having a commentary for the *Tiru-vāymoḷi* for the understanding of its philosophical and

religious purport. The *Six Thousand* was the first work brought out by Piḷḷāṉ. Very soon other commentaries followed from the pen of Nañcīyar, Aḻakiyamaṇavāḷa Jīyar, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai, Vatakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai Kōṉeri, Tāśyai, Raṅgarāmānujamuṉi, Periyaparakālaśvāmin, Vedānta Rāmānujaśvāmin and others giving out the various shades of meanings and different kinds of interpretations to certain verses in these compositions thus contributing a great deal towards the philosophy and religion of the Āḻvārs.

NĀTHAMUNI TO RĀMĀNUJA

FROM THE ĀḶVĀRS TO THE ĀCĀRYAS: There arose a new epoch in the history of *Sri Vaiṣṇavism* – the age of the Ācāryas. The hagiologists make a distinction between the Āḷvārs and Ācāryas in this, that, while the former were only inspired men who were divers into divinity, the latter, though they too are inspired, had their inspiration tempered by learning and scholarship. The Ācāryas are the expositors of the Āḷvārs' experience; they based their teachings on both the Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures. Their task was to interpret the Āḷvārs' experience in terms of Viśiṣṭādvaitic thought and the Viśiṣṭādvaidic philosophy in terms of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism and spread the gospel of *prapatti* among all persons. They taught that Brahman is the *sarīrin* of all persons and things and though He is the One without a second metaphysically, He also exists as Srīman Nārāyaṇa in the interests of world redemption. Further, they did not solely rely on *bhakti* as the Āḷvārs had done, but united *jñāna* and *karma* with it for realizing God. This was required to be done in the light of *Prasthānatraya*.

THE ROLE OF THE ĀCARYAS: The main object of the Ācāryas was to reconcile the teachings of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* with those of the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, and the *Gītā*. In fact, they aimed at interpreting the former in terms of the latter. In consequence of this, posterity has given them the significant title of *Ubhaya-Vedāntins*. It is worthy of note that the Ācāryas regarded the Āḷvārs as objects of worship – in fact, as the incarnations of Viṣṇu's weapons, carriers, or immediate followers in Vaikuṇṭha.[1] They regarded the Tamil

1. According to the *Guruparamparās* Poykaiyār, Pūtattār and Pēyār were the incarnations of Saṅkha (conch), Gada (club), Nandaka (sword); Tirumalicaip pirāṉ was regarded as the incarnation of Cakra (wheel) of Viṣṇu, Nammāḷvār that of Visvaksena, Kula-

Prabandham as the equal of the *Vedas*, and introduced it in public and private worship. They thus broadened the curricula of holy studies so as to include Tamil scriptures, and were the promoters of the Āḷvār cult. Further, they elaborated and perfected the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of thought with the aid of the doctrines, particularly that of self-surrender which they dervied from the Āḷvārs as well as from others sources. Ācāryas passed through the different stages of orthodox life, and discharged their duties so as to serve as patterns for their followers. All the Srī Vaiṣṇava festivals, observances, fasts, vows and customs can be traced to the rules laid down by the Ācāryas. They were thus the makers of modern Srī Vaiṣṇavism – its society, rituals, practices and ideals It is not surprising, therefore, that they too, in their turn, have become objects of worship, and have been raised to equality with the Āḷvārs whom they themselves apotheosized.

NĀTHAMUNI–HIS SERVICES TO VAIṢṆAVISM: The first of the Ācāryas was the famous Nāthamuni whose full name was Raṅganāthamuni. Nāthamuni was an erudite scholar in the *Vedas*, *Smṛtis*, and other scriptures; he was a *yogin* and a great devotee of Viṣṇu. He was born, according to *Guruparampară* tradition, in the year *Sobhakṛt* of *Kaliyuga* 3684 which corresponds to 583 A.D. and lived for 340 years. This account becomes inadmissible, since the period of these 340 years corresponds to that of the Āḷvārs, and it does not fit in with the tradition that Nāthamuni was for a long time not aware of the compositions of the Āḷvārs till he heard the eleven verses of Nammāḷvār[2] sung by the devotees who visited his place Vīranārāyaṇapuram.[3] It is also said in the *Guruparampară* that he did not live up to 916 A.D. when his grandson

---

cēkarap-perumāḷ that of Kaustubha, Periyāḷvār that of Garuḍa, Toṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭiyāḷvār that of Vanamāla and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār that of Sārṅga. Āṇṭāḷ was considered to be the incarnation of Nīla Dēvi.

2. T.V.M. 5.8.

3. G.P. p. 72. The place is now known as Kāṭṭumaṉṉār kōyil (South Arcot District).

Āḷavantār was born.[4] Therefore his date of birth could be fixed as 823 A.D. which was also *Sobhakṛt* year. He could have lived up to about eighty years, till 903 A.D.

HIS ELEVATION OF THE STATUS OF THE PRABANDHAMS: It has already been mentioned how Nāthamuni acquired the Four Thousand verses of the Āḷvārs direct from Nammāḷvār.[5] He collated these verses and arranged them into four parts of approximately one thousand verses each, in the manner of four *Vedas* arranged by Vyāśa, added introductory verses to some sections and classified the verses according to different metres; the musical modes of these verses were also settled by Nāthamuni with the help of his two nephews and introduced the *Prabandham* to be sung in the temple of Rājagopāla in his village.[6] By giving the *Prabandham* the status of the *Vedas* in the temple, he proved that the holiness of the works written in Tamil was not in any way inferior to that of the works written in Sanskrit. Very soon the *Prabandham* came to be, like the *Vedas*, an essential part of Srī Vaiṣṇavas' education.

Besides arranging for the recitation of the compositions of the Āḷvārs, Nāthamuni composed four introductory verses, three in Sanskrit and one in Tamil. The verses of this kind are technically known as '*taniyans*'. They bring out the greatness of the particular Āḷvār and of his contribution, before the compositions of the Āḷvār are sung. The first piece is in praise of Periyāḷvār.[7] Here it is said that this Āḷvār was able to cite passage after passage from the *Vedas* when he argued before Vallabhadeva of Madurai and established the superiority of Viṣṇu over other deities. He had not studied the *Vedas* in the traditional manner from any preceptor. Neverthless, he could distinguish himself as well-versed in the *Vedas* through the Grace of God. He was the father-in-law of Lord Raṅganātha. He was respected by gods and was an ornament for the Brahmin community. This piece is recited

4. ibid. p.76.
5. Vide : Section III. Chapter X.
6. G.P. p.73.
7. This begins with the words "*Gurmukhamanadhītya*".

when *Periyāḷvār Tirumoḷi* is taken up for recital. The second verse is sung before Maturakavivāḷvār's composition is taken up for recitation.[8] Nāthamuni prays for Maturakavi's appearance in his heart. He is keen not to forget him, as it is only for reciting this Āḷvār's piece *Kaṇṇinuṇ-ciṟuttāmpu* 12,000 times he was able to get the vision of Nammāḷvār.[9] Here it is said that Maturakavi did not know any thing in the world except Nammāḷvār. His only happy experience consisted in singing the *Upaniṣads*. By the word '*upaniṣad*', Nāthamuni means that the compositions of Nammāḷvār were held by Maturakavi who was well versed in the *Vedas* and *Sāśtrās*[10] as sacred as the *Upaniṣads*. Attracted by the qualities of Saṭhakōpa, Maturakavi considered Nammāḷvār as the only *śēśin* for him. There is also a Tamil piece in praise of Maturakavi.[11] Here it is stated that Maturakavi is the only saviour for Nāthamuni. Maturakavi felt convinced that his existence was dependent on Nammāḷvār who was also known as Māṟan, whose songs capture the essence of the *Vedas* in Tamil and who was the chief person in Āḷvār Tirunakari. He did not know any thing else and sang in praise of Nammāḷvār. The fourth piece which is in Sanskrit is in praise of *Tiruvāymoḷi*,[12] and is recited before its recital is taken up The *Tiruvāymoḷi* is an ocean as it were of the Tamil *Vedas* It appears to its devotees as nectar, thus conferring on them immortality so that they would never miss the grace of the Āḷvār and of God. It is admirable and acceptable to all the people. It grants the four fold aims of life (*puruṣārtha*). It is in the form of utterances of the Āḷvār and it is only the *Chāndōgya Upaniṣad* in Tamil containing one thousand verses which correspond to the thousand recensions of the *Sāma-veda*. These four verses bring out clearly the respect which Nāthamuni had for the comositions of the Āḷvārs.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ĀCĀRYA CULT: Once made a holy authority, the *Prabandham* had to be intensively studied,

8. It commences with the words "*Avidita viṣayāntaram*".
9. G.P. p.72.
10. ibid. p.56.
11. It begins with the words "*Vēṟoṉṟum nāṉaṟiyēṉ*."
12. It begins with the words "*Bhaktāmṛtam*".

obscure passages had to be explained and commentaries had to be written. The words of the Āḻvārs had to be interpreted in the light of the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*. All this required the formal recognit on of an authoritative pontiff. This necessity together with that of expanding and defending the *Pāñcarātra* doctrine against rivals, led to the establishment of the post of a universal Ācārya, whose authority was law in religious worship and whos advice was a guide to temples and householders. It was natural that when the institution of the pontiff was established, the choice fell on Nāthamuni.

INSTALLATION OF THE IMAGES OF ĀḺVĀRS IN TEMPLES: Nāthamuni took efforts to install the images of Āḻvārs in the Śrīraṅgam temple and made arrangements for their birth-day celebrations. The recitation of the *Prabandham* was made an integral part of temple worship at Śrīraṅgam. This innovation effected a silent revolution in temple worship, as it raised the status of the *Prabandham* to the level of the *Veda* and liberalised the meaning of Revelation. The celebration of Prabandham-recitation festival, otherwise popularly known as *Pakal-Pattu* and *Irāp-pattu* (Day-Ten and Night-Ten) integrated with the great Ēkādaśi Festival in the month of Mārkaḻi (November-December) was introduced lasting for three weeks. The adoption of the *Prabandham* as a sacred text by the Śrīraṅgam temple and of the Prabandham-recitation festival was very soon taken up by the prominent Vaiṣṇavite temples of South India. The establishment of the images of the Āḻvārs and the recitation-festival soon spread throughout the Srī-Vaiṣṇavaite world. There is epigraphic evidence that at least from the time of the Cōḻa king Rājarāja I, the hymns were recited in Viṣṇu temples during worship and in festivals just as *Tēvāram* hymns were recited in Śiva temples. One inscription of 1242 A.D. mentions a choir of fifty-eight brahmins reciting *Tiruvāymoḻi* in Kāñcipuram [13]

THE WORKS OF NĀTHAMUNI: With Nāthamuni, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism commenced a new era of activity and expansion. As a schalor and thinker he wrote two Sanskrit works, viz.,

13. *Development of Religion in South India* – p.123.

Nyāya-tattva and *Yōga-rahasya*. Both the works are now lost except a few stray quotations from *Nyāya-tattva* which are given in the *Nyāya-Siddhāñjana* and other works of Vedānta Deśika.[14] *Nyāya-tattva* is the first modern treatise on the Visiṣṭādvaita Metaphysics and Logic and it was elaborated by the later Ācaryas *Yōga-rahasya* appears to have dealt with the methods of meditation (*yōga*) for God-realization probably according to the Vaiṣṇavite school. Probably the doctrine of self surrender, the most important dogma of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, was first authoritatively enunciated by Nāthamuni. He is said to have had eight disciples[15] of whom Uyyak-koṇṭār and Kurukaik-kāvalappaṉ were the most prominent. Nāthamuni imparted all the fundamentals of the Ācārya cult to these disciples.

UYYAK-KOṆṬĀR: Nāthamuni devoted all his time in his last days to the practice of *samādhi*.[16] He was thus, in another respect, a true representative of the tradition of *Vaiṣṇavism* of adopting meditation as the appropriate means for obtaining direct vision of the Lord.[17]

Nāthamuni was succeeded by Uyyak-koṇṭār (826–931 A.D.)[18] otherwise known as Puṇḍarīkākṣa for a short period of spiritual headship. He had six disciples, namely, (i) Maṇakkāl Nampi, (ii) Tiruvallik-kēṇip-pāṇperumāḷ araiyar, (iii) Ceṭṭaip-pūcic-centalaṅkārar, (iv) Srī Puṇṭarīka-

---

14. *Nyāya-tattva* is also referred to by Vedānta Deśika in his *Nyāya-parisuddhi* in which Gautama's *Nyāya-sūtras* were criticised and refuted. p. 13.

15. They are: (i) Uyyak-koṇṭār, (ii) Kurukaik-kāvalappaṉ, (iii) Nampi karuṇākaratāsar, (iv) Ēṟu-tiruvuṭaiyār, (v) Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkaiyāṇṭāṉ (vi) Vāṉamāmalai tēviyāṇṭāṉ (vii) Urupaṭṭūr Āccan Piḷḷai, and (viii) Cōkatūr Āḻvāṉ (vide *Āḻvārkaḷ Vaḻikkuravar Varalāṟu*, p. 17).

16. G.P. p. 76.

17. There are mentioned two occurrences which happened in his last days which show how effectively he used this means to realize God (vide G.P. pp. 75-77).

18. He was born in the year *Parābhava* (826 A.D.) and lived for 105 years. Vide A.G.P. fol. 13(b), 14(a)

tāsar, (v) Kōmaṭam Tiruviṇṇakarappaṉ and (vi) Ulakup-perumāḷ Naṅkai. It is stated that Maṇkkāl Nampi served his master Uyyak-koṇṭār for twelve years as a devoted disciple. After the death of his master's wife, he took charge also of the household duties of his venerable *guru*. Uyyak-koṇṭār asked Maṇakkāl Nampi to teach Yāmuna all that he was taught. Yāmuna, however, was not born during the lifetime of Uyyak-koṇṭār,[19] and Uyyak-koṇṭār only prophesied his birth in accordance with the old prophecy of Nāthamuni.

Uyyak-koṇṭār's training under Nāthamuni and in all probability his realization of the supreme significance of the *Dvaya-mantra*, made him endear himself to the message contained in the *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ. It is not therefore surprising that he, in his zeal to carry on the traditional responsibility entrusted to him by his preceptor, should have been alive to the need to propagate the philosophy of the Āḷvārs. Hence he composed two verses in Tamil which are now sung before *Tiruppāvai* is recited.

The first verse[20] means that one must repeatedly utter the name of Āṇṭāḷ who was born in Srīvillipputtur, who composed several lyrical verses in praise of Srī Raṅganātha rendering them in musical melodies. She had also decked herself with flower garlands prior to the offering of them to the Lord. In the other verse,[21] he addresses Āṇṭāḷ as a golden creeper. She was wearing various kinds of bangles, the resonant sounds of which were heard while she undertook an observance according to an ancient tradition. He desires that she should help him in scrupulously realizing the significance of the *Tiruppāvai* and putting it in practice. The purport of the *Tiruppāvai* is stated to be that its reciter requests Āṇṭāḷ to enjoin on him Kaiṅkarya to Srī Vēṅkaṭēśwara, the Lord of Tirumalai. Perhaps, this is suggestive of the practice of the

---

19. In the light of this information which is contained in G.P. p. 78, it is difficult to admit the evidence of P.T.A. on the direction of Uyyak-koṇṭār's life.
20. It begins with the words "*Aṉṉvayal putuvai*"
21. This begins with the words "*Cūṭikkoṭutta*".

Hindus to undertake any observance in the name of Srī Vēṅkaṭēśwarā, which is in vogue even today and must have been the case even in the days of Uyyak-koṇṭār.

The other chief disciplies of Nāthamuni, named Kurukaikkāvalappaṉ, inherited from his master the methods of meditating on God. He spent much of his time in meditation. Āḷavantār, the grandson of Nāthamuni, missed initiation in *yoga* from him who directed the former to meet him on a particular day. Āḷavantār did not remember the day and went to see only the vacant site where the master would be in deep meditation. These practices did not deter Kurukaikkāvalappaṉ from evincing interest in the *Divya Prabandham*. His direct visualizing of God through *yogic* practices must have created a liking, in particular, for the *Third Antāti* of Pēyāḷvār who began his composition with his glimpse of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.[22] Pēyāḷvār was also a *yogin*. Hence Kurukaik kāvalappaṉ composed a verse in Tamil which is sung before this *Antāti* is taken up for recitation.[23] Here it is said that this Āḷvār saw God who resembled the cloud in complexion in the beautiful Tirukkōvalūr. The mind is asked to think in praise of that Āḷvār's feet who said "I saw Lakṣmī". In the *Tiruvāymoḷi*[24] the Āḷvār says that God had entered into him. There He remained with unsurpassed knowledge and all auspicious qualities. The Āḷvār is visulizing Him. The Lord is so attached to the Āḷvār that he would not divert His attention towards anything else. Kurukaikkāvalappaṉ is stated to have explained to Āḷavāntar and added that even if Lakṣmī were to tighten Him in Her embrace behind, he would not have His attention diverted from the Āḷvār.[25]

Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkaiyāṇṭāṉ another disciple of Nāthamuni composed two verses which are sung before Āṇṭāḷ's *Nācciyār-tirumoḷi* is taken up for recitation. In the first

---

22. Mu. Tv. 1.
23. This begins with the words "*Cīrārum māṭa*".
24. T.V.M. 2. 6 : 2.
25. Vide Periyavāccāṉ Pillai's commentary to T.V.M. 2. 6 : 2 in his *Twenty-Four Thousand*.

piece[26] Āṇṭāḷ is said to be the friend of the divine woman Lakṣmī whose seat is the lotus. Āṇṭāḷ was well-known as the beautiful daughter of Viṣṇu-cittaṉ not only in Srī Villipputtūr but also in the adjoining Malli-nāṭu. She was like the enchanting peacock for that region. This may be taken to mean that she captivated that region also through her qualities. She well deserved to be in the company of Kṛṣṇa. She was the lamp for the family of Vēyars in which her foster-father Viṣṇu-cittaṉ was born. In the second "*taniyaṉ*",[27] reference is made to Āṇṭāḷ's asking the conch *Pāñcacaṉya* how it felt the mouth of the Lord when he blew it.[28] She asks it to explain how fragrant the mouth of the Lord would be. She was like the parrot moving in the groves and capable of offering to Srī Raṅganātha the garland which she wore at first. Her holy Feet, Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkaiyāṇṭāṉ tells us in this verse, are the refuge for all. Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkaiyāṇṭāṉ must have been a native of Tirukkṇṇamaṅkai which is a place rendered holy by the hymns of Āḷvārs and situated near Tiruvārūr in Thanjavūr Disrrict.

Besides these, Īśvaramuni, the son of Nāthamuni, appears to have evinced a great interest in the propagation of the philosophy of Nammāḷvār's compositions. He composed a verse for being sung before *Tiruvāymoḷi* is taken up for recitation. In this piece which is in Tamil[29] the mind is asked to remain clear and think constantly of the place of Nammāḷvār which is called by several names such as 'Tiruvaḷuti nāṭu' 'Teṉkurukūr', 'the beautiful Tāmparaparaṇi'. The mind shall always contemplate upon the Feet of the Āḷvār who composed Tamil *Antātis* equivalent to the *Vedas*. There is one more piece[30] by this scholar[31] which is to be sung

26. This begins with the words "*Allināṭṭāmarai*".
27. This begins with the words "*Kōlaccuriccaṅkai*".
28. Nac. Tm. 7.
29. 1t begins with the words "*Tiruvaḷuti nāṭu*".
30. This begins with the words ',*Manattālum vāyālum*".
31. This scholar is mentioned as Coṭṭai Nambi in the printed editions of *Tiruvāymoḷi*. He is identified with Īśvarabhattāḷvāṉ, son of Nāthamuni, since he belonged to the family known as 'Coṭṭai' (vide G.P. p,83).

before undertaking the recitation of *Tiruvāymoḷi*. Here the scholar says that he would not worship either by words or by thought any one except those who worship Nammāḷvār.[32] He is not in any way poor for that. He has taken shelter under Saṭhakōpa.

MAṆKKĀL NAMPI: Maṇakkāl Nampi (889–994 A.D.)[33] who was also known as Śrīrāma was the successor to the pontifical seat which Uyyak-koṇṭār occupied. The latter could not live to see the birth of a grandson for Nāthamuni and so he instructed his pupil Maṇakkāl Nampi to carryon the tradition through 'Yamunait-tuṟaivaṉ' which, according to the wish of Nāthamuni, shall be the name of the grandson[34] Accordingly, a son was born to Īśvaramuni, son of Nāthamuni and he was named Yamunait-tuṟaivaṉ by him. After education, circumstances brought to Yāmuna which is the shortened form of the boy's name, a princely life in the palace of the ruling king where he was known as Āḷavantār. Maṇakkāl Nampi managed to meet him in person and took him to Śrīraṅgam where he taught him the *Bhagavad-gītā* which he learnt from his preceptor.[35] His contribution to the study of the Āḷvār's compositions is a verse which he composed in Tamil[36] to be sung before undertaking the recitation of *Perumāl-tirumoḷi* of Kulacēkarāḷvār. Here is a reference made to an incident which is narrated in the *Guruparamparās*[37] to have taken place in the life of Kulacēkarar when he was the king An ornament was lost and the devotees of God, with whom the king moved freely, were suspected to have committed theft by the palace authorities. To convince them that the devotees of God would not have stooped to pilfering, Kulacēkarāḷvār introduced his hand inside a jar within which a poisonous cobra was placed. Their innocence was to be admitted if the

---

32. Bodily worship must be intended here.
33. He was born in the year *Virōdhi* of *Kaliyuga* 4052 vide P.T.A. p.
34. G.P. p. 78.
35. ibid. p. 81.
36. It begins with the words "*Āram Ketapparan*".
37. G.P. p. 26.

serpent did not bite him. He thus got a victory over his enemies. A great archer and the king of Kolli, a Cera is addressed here as the chief of kings. This is clear proof to suggest that Maṇakkāl Nampi was in touch with the propagation of the Āḷvārs. The suggestion that perhaps this verse which was composed by Maṇakkāl Nampi could have been intended by its author to wean Āḷavantār away from the royal glory which he was then enjoying may be admitted but is lacking in evidence to support it. Besides, it is not stated that he taught any of the compositions of the Āḷvārs to Āḷavnatār.

Maṇakkāl Nampi had five disciples, namely, (i) Yāmuna, (ii) Teivattukkaracu Nampi (iii) Kōmatam Tiruviṇṇakarappaṉ, (iv) Ciṟupaḷḷūruṭaiya Piḷḷai and (v) Vaṅkipurattu āycci.[38] Maṇakkāl Nampi used to stay at Śrī Raṅgam and expounded the doctrines of the Visiṣṭādvaita.

YĀMUNA ALIAS AḶAVANTĀR: Maṇakkāl Nampi was succeeded by Yāmuna as the spiritual head.[39] Even as a boy, it is stated, that Yāmuna showed his prodigious learning and skill when he accepted the challenge of Ākkiyāḷvāṉ, the court Pandit of the Cōḷa King, made to his teacher Mahābhāṣya Paṭṭar and easily vanquished him in the learned assembly of the king by a clever puzzle.[40] He was at once greeted by the queen as "Āḷavantār" for having conquered the proud poet, and was granted a portion of the kingdom according to the terms of the polemic duel. Thereafter he was known as "Āḷavantār." He lived a life of luxurious ease for a long time, enjoying his riches, and took no notice of Maṇakkāl Nampi. But Maṇakkāl Nampi with some difficulty obtained access to him[41] and availed himself of the opportunity

38. *Āḷvārkaḷ Vaḷikkuravar Varalāṟu*, p. 35.

39. He was born in Kali 4017 *Dhātu* year (916 A.D.) and lived for 125 years vide P.T.A. p.

40. *Prapannāmṛtam*, Chap. III.

41. There is an anecdote in the *Prapannāmṛtam* to the effect that, when Yāmuna became a king and inaccessible to Maṇakkāl Nampi the latter was very much concerned as to how he could carry out the commands of his teachers and initiate Yāmuna into the path

of teaching him the *Bhagavad-gitā*, which aroused the spirit of detachment in him. Āḷavantār followed Maṇakkāl Nampi to Śrī Raṅgam eargerly to take possession of the treasure about which Maṇakkāl Nampi had intimated to him. There he was shown the Sleeping Beauty in the shining shrine and was told that was the patrimony bequeathed to him by his grand-father Nāthamuni. He became converted and, renouncing everything, became a great devotee and took *sannyāsa*. One of the last instructions of Maṇkkāl Nampi was to direct him to go to Kurukaik-kāvalappaṉ and learn from him the *yoga-rahaśya* which was taught to him by his grand-father who had asked his disciple, Kurukaik-kāvalappaṉ to communicate the same to his grand-son Yāmuna.

YĀMUNA'S CONTRIBUTIONS: After becoming a *sannyāsi* Āḷvantār's whole life was dedicated to spirituality and service, the twin ideals of a Vaiṣṇavite and he made Śrī Raṅgam a veritable Vaikuṇtha on earth. As a philosoper his main task was the criticism of the *Advaita*, and he was an eminent controversialist and author of valuable treatises on *Vedānta*. He was fond of Nammāḷvār's works the doctorines of which were often explained to the people. He was the author of six *rahaśya* works, viz , (i) *Siddhi-traya*, (ii) *Gitārtha-saṅgraha*, (iii) *Āgama-pramāṇya*, (iv) *Stōtra-ratṇa*, (v) *Catu-ślōki* and (vi) *Mahā-puruṣa-nirṇaya*. Of these the *Siddhi-traya* is the most important which explains the main teachings of Viśiṣtādvaita in three sections: *Ātma-siddhi*, *Iśvara-siddhi*, and *Saṁvit-siddhi*, demonstrating respectively the nature of the individual soul, the supreme Lord and relation between the soul and the objects of percep-

---

of devotion. He got into tuch with Yāmun's cook, and for six months presented some green vegetables (*alarka-śāka*) which Yāmuna very much liked. When, after the six months, the king asked how the rare vegetables found their way in the kitchen, Maṇakkāl Nampi stayed away for four days praying to the Lord Raṅgāṇatha, the the local deity, to tell him how he could approach Yāmuna. In the meanwhile, the king missed the green vegetables and asked his cook to present the old *sannyāsi* when next he should come to the kitchen: Maṇakkāl Nampi was thus presented to Yāmuna.

tion. His *Gītārtha-saṅgraha* is a masterly summary of the truths of the *Gītā* and it is a luminous exposition in about thirty two *ślōkas* of the nature of *prakṛiti*, *puruṣa* and *puruṣōttama* and of the need of *bhakti* and *prapatti* as the supreme means of salvation. According to Āḷvantār, *yōga* in the *Gītā* means *bhakti-yōga*. This work was later developed by Rāmānuja and further elaborated by Vedānta Desika. The *Āgama-pramāṇya* is a work in which he tries to establish the high antiquity and undisputed authority of the *Pañcarātra* literature, which is supposed to be the canon of the Srīvaiṣṇavites. Āḷavantār's *Śtōtra-ratna*, which is a master-piece of lyrical devotion, reveals his discering faith in Nārāyaṇa and Srī and the intense humility of the philosopher-devotee who pours forth his heart-felt *bhakti* in seventy soul-stirring verses to which there is no parallel in *Śtōtra* literature. It is really in ardent praise of the doctorine of self-surrender. The *Catu-ślōkī*, as the name itself implies, is a poem consisting of four verses in praise of Srī Lakṣmī, It describes the status of Lakṣmi as the consort of Viṣnu and the part played by her in the soul's salvation. It is the earliest of the *ślōtras* sung about Srī and furnishes the foundation and basis of later works on *Srī Tattva* such as those of Āḷvāṉ, Parācara Paṭṭar and Vedānta Desika. In his *Mahāpuruṣa-nirṇaya*, Yāmuna proves the supremacy of Viṣṇu, who, he holds, is the *Mahāpuruṣa* of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, "the essence of the *Vedas*". In fact, Yāuma has clearly laid down the lines on which Rāmānuja later on elaborated the system of Viśiṣtādvaita.

His *Śtōtra-ratna* is, firstly, highly suggestive of his indebtedness to the contents of the *Nālāyiram*. A casual study of this poem would suggest this, and a critical study would confirm it.[42] Secondly, Yāmuna had three wishes to accomplish in this life-time, but he could not carry out even one among them. His hand had three fingers bent even

42. cf. *Śtōtra-ratna*, 40; M.Tv. 53.
ibid. 22; TVM 6.10: 10; 5.7: 1.
ibid. 38; ibid. 10.10: 2.
ibid. 61; Tc.V. 90.

though he expired. Rāmānuja, who was brought there by Periya Nampi, one of the disciples of Yāmuna, at the behest of the master, noted this and enquired if the master had any wish of his unfulfilled. The disciples who were assembled there informed Rāmānuja of the master's wishes. One among them was that much interest should be shown in the compositions of Nammāḷvār. Rāmānuja agreed to carry out all the three wishes upon which the fingers got straightened. From this, it is evident, Yāmuna had an earnest desire to make people familiar with the teachings of the Āḷvārs.[43]

A more convincing evidence to prove that Yāmuna had deep enthusiasm for the propagation of *Tiruvāymoḷi* is from the verse composed in honour of Nammḷvār and which forms part of his *Śtōtra-ratna*. Here he tells of his bowing his head at the Feet of Nammāḷvār. These feet are attractive because of the *bakuḷa* flowers adorning them. He admits the Āḷvār as the chief of the entire family of those who had surrendered themselves to the Lord. The Feet of the Āḷvār represent the mother, father, young women, sons and material prosperity and so for him, they are everything and there is nothing for him but them. While interpreting the verse[44] in *Tiruvāymoḷi*, Yāmuna is said to have interpreted the word '*tamiḷar*' as refering to the first three Āḷvārs, the word '*icaikārar*' to Tiruppāṇāḷvār and the word '*paṭṭar*' to Periyāḷvār.[45].

In this connection it is amusing to find later sub-commentaries of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, frequent rererences to the view of Yāmuna on the import of some of the hymns of Nammaḷvār. The *Guruparamparā* does not mention anywhere that he was taught the *Prabandhams* from any preceptor, yet it is not proper to suggest that Yāmuna did not offer any comment on these hymns. What is difficult to understand is the absence of a single reference expressive of Yāmuna's views in the *Six Thousand* of Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ and *Nine Thousand* of Nañcīyar. Frequent references to these are found in the

43. G.P. p. 102.
44. TVM. 1.5: 11.
45. *Īṭu* on 1.5: 11.

Twenty-four-Thousand of Periyavāccān Pillai (1168–1263 A D.) and *Thirty-six-Thousand Īṭu* of Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai (1168–1265 A-D). In all probability, these matters passed on orally from preceptor to pupil until they got recorded in the sub-commentaries of the above-mentioned two writers.

There is one aspect which remains inexplicable. In some of the cases noted by the commentators Rāmānuja explains in full, the significance of Yāmuna's interpretation.[46] In certain cases, the later commentators note a difference of opinion offered by Rāmānuja, when he was taught by Titumālai-yāṇṭāṉ (Māiādhara) the interpretation of Yāmuna. With reference to the purport of one *Tiruvāy-moḻi*,[47] it is said that Tirumālai-yāṇṭāṉ said to Ramānuja that this decad conveyed the significance of *prapatti*. After writing *Śrī Bhaṣya* Ramānuja took this decad to convey the sense of *bhakti*. Empār also followed Rāmānuja in this respect. It is a bit fantastic to note that Rāmānuja, who succeeded Yāmuna as the religious head in accordance with the instructions of Yāmuna and who expressly stated at the beginning of his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita* that he had become an entity at all only through the grace of Yāmuna, should offer a different interpretation to this decad even after Tirumālai-yāṇṭāṉ told him of Yāmuna's view. That *bhakti* is dealt with here is stated in the *Six Thousand*, *Dramidōpaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali* of Vedānta Desika and *Dramidopaniṣatsaṅgati* of Aḷagiyamaṇavāla-jīyar. Evidently Ramānuja's teaching was followed by all these writers but there is no evidence to prove that Yāmunācārya declared *prapatti* to be the purport except in these later commentaries. In all likelihood, Yāmuna did not subscribe to this view and so a reference like this cannot be valid by itself.[48] In some instances, Tirumālai-yāṇṭāṉ is said to have mentioned to Rāmānuja the name of Yāmuna with the interpretation.[49]

46. *Twenty-Four Thousand* on TVM. 2.10; 3.3: 6; 5.1: 9; 5.10: 4; 6.1: 10; 7.9: 1; 8.9: 3; 9.9.
47. *Iṭu* on TVM 1.2.
48. There are sirmilar instances : Vide *Twenty-Four Thousand* on 2.3: 1; 2.3: 3: 2.5: 1.
49. cf. *Twetny-Four Thousand* on 1.2; 10.4; 5.2.

YĀMUNA'S DISCIPLES: Yāmuna is referred to by later writers as Periya Mudaliar.[50] Though he did not write anything by way of a commentary on the *Nālāyira Prabandham* he was instrumental in arousing a living interest among his pupils and grand pupils for the study of the compositions of the Āḻvārs. It is stated that Āḷavantār had twenty-one disciples[51] of whom six were most prominent, namely, (i) Periya Namp', (ii) Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷ Araiyar, (iii) Tirukkacci Nampi, (iv) Tirumālai-yāṇṭāṉ, (v) Tirumalai Nampi, and (vi) Tirukkōṭṭiyur Nampi. The other disciples were: (i) Māṟaṉēr Nampi, (ii) Āḷavantār Āḻvāṉ, (iii) Vāṉamāmalai-yāṇṭāṉ, (iv) Teivavāri Āṇṭāṉ, (v) Īśanāṇṭāṉ, (vi) Jīyar Āṇṭāṉ (vii) Tirukkurukūrappaṉ, (viii) Tirumōkūrappaṉ, (ix) Tirumōkūr Niṉṟāṉ, (x) Teivap-perumāl, (xi) Vakuḷaparaṇa Comāciyār, (xii) Tirukkurukūr-tāsar, (xiii) Tirumāliruñcōlai-tāsar, (xiv) Vaṭamaturaip-piṟantāṉ, and (xv) Ātkoṇṭiyammaṅki.

Among his disciples, Tirukkacci Nampi,[52] composed two verses in Tamil to be sung before taking up the *Tiruccanta-viruttam* of Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār. In the first verse,[53] the place Tirumaḻicai is described to be an enchanting one with fragrance of sandal and aloe wood emanating, the kōṅku trees spread all over there emitting delecatable aroma. The Āḻvār composed the *Tiruccanta-viruttam* to relieve the world of its miseries, and this means that a recital and understanding of this composition would rid people of their sufferings. The other verse[54] means that in ancient days, a question arose as to the relative superiority of the earth and the sacred place Tirumaḻicai. So the two were placed in a balance and it was found that Tirumaḻicai was found heavier than the earth

50. *Īṭu* on 6.2: 1; 9.8; *Rahaśyatrava-sāra*. p. 308.
51. *Āḻvārkaḷ Vaḷikkuravar Varalāṟu*, p.34.
52. He was born in the year *Sobhakṛt* which corresponds to 943 A.D. A.G.P. 19(b). He was also known as Kāñci-pūrṇa.
53. This begins with the words, "*Taruccantap-poḻil*".
54. It begins with the words, "*Ulakum maḻicaiyum*".

because of its superior excellence.[55] Thus the greatness of this sacred spot is referred to here.

Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷaraiyar (son of Yāmuna)[56] who was also known as Āḷavantārāḷvār taught Rāmānuja the *Divya Prabandham*. He is referred to as a good singer who could depict the emotions of the hymns of *Tiruvāymoḷi* with appropriate gesticulations.[57] The later commentary *Īṭu* contains a reference to his interpretation of a hymn of Nammāḷvār.[58] In a verse composed in Tamil[59] in praise of the *Tirumālai* of Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār this scholar asks the mind not to wander unnecessarily elsewhere. He wants to speak of this Āḷvār who composed *Tirumālai* which is in praise of Lord Raṅganātha who went after cows while they were grazing. The other Tamil verse[60] composed by him is in praise of the place of Maṇṭaṅkuṭi which was inhabited by brahmins learned in the *Vedas*. It was an old town, the residential place of this Āḷvār. The fields all round are resonant with the humming bees. The Āḷvār has sung the hymn *Tiruppaḷḷi-eḻucci* to arouse Lord Raṅganātha from His holy slumber.

Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ,[61] known also as Mālādhara, taught Rāmānuja the interpretations of *Tiruvāymoḷi* as he was taught by Āḷavantār. According to him, *Tiruvāymoḷi* 1.2 conveyed the sense of *prapatti*. The finite self shall consider itself as lucky if it could recollect God's name and His greatness at the point of death and be clearly conscious of himself being the *śeṣa* of God.[62] This scholar is sometimes referred to as simply Āṇṭāṉ.[63] The views of this scholar are said to have

55. Civajñāṉa Muṉivar in describing the beauty of the city of Kañci employs the same analogy, but in a more improved form (Vide *Kāñcipurāṇam-Nakarap-paṭalam*. St.1.).
56. He was born in the year *Pingala* which corresponds to 957 A.D. A.G.P. fol. 18(a).
57. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 5.3: 6.
58. ibid. on T.V.M.5.10: 6.
59. The verse begins with the words, "*Maṟṟoṉṟum vēṇṭā*".
60. It begins with the words "*Maṇṭaṅkuṭi-eṉpar*"
61. He was born in the year *Sarvadhāri* which borresponds to 988 A.D. Vide A.G.P. fol. 19(a).
62. *Twenty-Four Thousand* on TVM 8.8: 8.
63. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 5.6: 7; 5.8: 4; 8.8: 8.

been expressed by his disciple Iḷaiyaperumāḷ.[64] It is said that he was surprised to hear from Rāmānuja different interpretations for the compositions of Nammāḷvār different from what he learnt from his master.[65] He composed a verse in Sanskrit to be sung before taking up the recitation of Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār's *Tiruppaḷḷi-eḻucci.*[66] Here the author conveys his respects to the holy Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi who composed the composition to awaken the Lord from slumber. He considered Lord Raṅganātha as Para-Vāsudeva, the supreme deity in Srī Vaikuṇṭha and also was respected as though He were a king.

Periya Nampi (997–1102 A.D.)[67] who was also called Mahāpūrṇa was the immediate preceptor of Rāmānuja and was one of the disciples of Yāmuna. It was he that initiated Rāmānuja in the secret doctrines of *Vaiṣṇavism* including the purport of the *Brāhma-sūtras.*[68] He composed a verse in Sanskrit[69] to be recited before Tiruppāṇāḷvār's *Amalaṉātipirāṉ* is taken up for recital. Here it is said that this Āḷvār rejoiced by beholding the Lord Who is reclining in the midst of the river Kāviri. He had the full experience of the Lord Who is reclining there, from foot to head (*pātāti-kēcam*) and decided that his eyes could not be set on any other object in the world. This Āḷvār occupies the enviable of position of having been carried to the shrine of Lord Raṅganātha by sage called Muṉivāhana.[70]

Tirumalai Nampi, one of the disciples of Yāmuna, who was also known as Srī Saila-pūrṇa was the maternal uncle of Ramānuja. Rāmānuja, it is said, got to know from him the full sense of *Rāmāyaṇa.*[71] He composed a verse in

64. ibid. 5.6: 7.
65. G:P. pp. 124–125; *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 2.7: 5.
66. It begins with the words, "*Tameva matva*".
67. He was eorn in Kali 4098 *Hēviḷambi* year (vide P.T.A. p. 12).
68. A.G.P. fol. 22(a).
69. It begins with the words; "*Āpādacūdam*".
70. G.P. p. 45.
71. ibid. p. 134.

Tamil[72] to be sung before Tiruppāṇāḻvār's *Amalanātipirāṉ* is taken up for recitation. Here it is described how the Āḻvār had the vision of delectable experience of Srī Raṅganātha from feet, clothing, navel, waist girdle, chest, neck, coral lips, eyes and the whole body of the lord. We shall sing the praise of this Āḻvār who had the direct communion with God through music. This scholar offers a fine observation on a hymn in *Tiruvāymoḻi*.[73] The Āḻvār says here that he could not offer any refreshing service to the Lord when He performed great exploits. However, the Lord has now applied the mind of the Āḻvār as an unguent which will soothen the tiresomeness of the Lord. This scholar remarks that ordinarily any one who gets the object which he is keen on getting, then slackens his interest on it in course of time. That is not the case with God-realization. He is never satiated with the vision of God which he is lucky to get.[74] Two illustrations are contained in the *Īṭu* and are given within brackets. It is not clear whether they could have been given by Tirumalai Nampi himself Kausalya said to Rāma that she could not live without him and desired to follow him to the forest. When Rāmā pointed out to her that what she was intending to do was against *dharma*, as she was attempting to leave her husband behind, she forgot all her misery and offered him all her blessings for a safe journey. Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna not to grieve or think of flight from fighting the enemies. Arjuna gave up his nervousness and experessed his willingness to fight.[75]

Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār sings in parise of the Lord at Māmallapuram[76] and identify Him with Kṛṣṇa with the manifold exploits and God as Kalki. In this connection, he describes the deity as resembling the blue cloud which takes in the waters from the tanks that are situated in the forests on the hills. Tirumalai Nampi offered here an interpretation for this. The comparison of the deity with the blue cloud

72. It begins with the words, *Kāṭṭavē kaṇṭa*''.
73. T.V.M. 4.3.
74. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 4.3.
75. Bh. G. 18: 73.
76. Peri. Tm. 2.5: 3.

be ju tified by showing the purpose for this comparison. The calves which Kṛṣṇa would be tending would move through the hills, bamboo groves and forests. Naturally they would become thirsty. The Lord creates a lake here. He takes water there along with them. With two palms dipped in water and face downwards, He would dring water. Having done this He becomes full (paripūrṇa),[77] that is, pleased that others are happy.

Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi,[78] who was one of the disciples of Yāmuna, taught Rāmānuja the secret doctrines (*rahaśya*). He composed a verse in Sanskrit[79] to be sung before the *Periya-tirumoḻi* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār is taken up for recitation. Here it is said that this scholar remembers the name of this Āḻvār with great regard. This Āḻvār had destroyed the evil effects of the *kaliyuga*. He was a sun illumining the world of poets. This is a direct reference to the title 'Poet in the four-fold branches of Tamil poetry' (*Nālukavip-perumāḷ*) which he acquired through his literary skill[80] and so was at the head of the poets. His compositions dispel the ignorance (or darkness) created by nescience. Internal darkness which is there in man due to past deeds is removed by the illumining compositions of this Āḻvār.

Thus the six disciples of Yāmuna kept alive the tradition of learning the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Much of what they had said by way of expounding and interpreting the hymns in these compositions should have remained unrecorded. The oral traditions kept some of these preserved to posterity. Rāmānuja should have derived immense inspiration from these scholars and their contributions. All these interpretations found themselves recorded in the commentaries of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai.

77. *Nigamaparimaḷa* of Periya Parakāla Swāmin on Peri. Tm. 2.5:3
78. He was boan in the year *Sarvajit* which corresponds to 987 A.D Vide P.T.A. p. 12.
79. It begins with the words, ',*Kaliyāmi kalidhvamsam.*"
80. G.P. p.52.

CHAPTER XXVIII

RĀMĀNUJA AND THE NĀLĀYIRAM

It was given to Āḷavantār to lay down only the fundamentals of Visiṣtādvaita philosophy and not to write an elaborate commentary on the *Vedānta-sutra* as Saṅkara had done for Advaita. That great task was performed by Rāmānuja, the synoptic thinker and saint. Rāmānuja's father was a disciple of his brother-in-law, Tirumalai Nampi, Āḷavantār's grand-son and disciple, who is said to have obtained from the Lord Himself the title of *Tātacārya*.[1] Rāmānujā is said to have been named as such by his maternal uncle, Tirumalai Nampi, who expected him to equal the great Lakṣmaṇa in his service and devotion to the Lord. The traditional date of Rāmānuja's birth is A.D. 1017,[2] and he is said to have lived for 120 years. According to one authority[3] his long life was spread over the reigns of three Cōḷa kings Kulōttuṅka I (A.D. 1070-1118), Vikram Cōḷa (A.D 1118-1135), and Kulōttuṅka II (A.D. 1123-1146).

Rāmānuja became the grand disciple of Āḷavantār whom he did not see in person. He was taken to SrīRaṅgam from Kāñci by Periya Nampi at the behest of Āḷavantār who was nearing his end, but he could see only the physical frame of Āḷavantār lying in state. As he looked intently on the whole figure and scanned it up and down, he discovered to his

---

1. The story is this: Tirumalai Nampi used to bring water for the *Tirūmañcanam* (bathing) of the Lord Srīnivāsa's image from the Pāpanāsa-tīrtha in the midst of the Tirumalai Hills. It is said that one day the Lord Himself relieved him of the arduous task in the guise of a youth, calling him 'Tātā' or grand-father.
2. He was born in the year *Piṅgala* which corresponds to A.D. 1017 Vide *Yatirajā Vāibhavam*. 6.
3. Aiyengar, S.K.: *Sri Rāmānujacārya* (Natesan & Co., Madras) as quoted by Dāsgupta (Vide: *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p.104).

surprise three of the fingers of the right palm of the sage remaining closed. He turned round to the assembly there and questioned them about the strange sight. But they replied that they had never marked that before. Rāmānuja reflected for a moment and thought that the sight had probably signified some unfulfilled ardent wish of the venerable saint. He asked the by-standers if they were aware of any specific wishes of the sage expressed to them at any time in the course of his religious talks with them. He got the reply from them that they were not particularly aware of such directly, but indirectly they knew that he wished very much to see three things perpetuated viz. (i) to convert people to the *prapatti* doctrine of Vaiṣṇavism making them well versed in the works of the Āḷvārs in general and the immortalization of the glory of Nammāḷvār in particular, (ii) to perpetuate the memory of Parācara, the author of the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, and (iii) to write a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra* to bring out the real Visiṣṭādvaita sense contained in the *sūtras*. On hearing this, Rāmānuja promised to fulfil the three great tasks, provided he had the health, the grace of the Ācārya (Āḷavantār), and the Divine will. It is chronicled that no sooner did he make this promise than the three bent fingers of the sage opened out as if to say: "Aye". The whole assembly was witness to this miracle. In one voice they declared that the sage's grace was fully on him, the very power and glory would enter into him and he was the fit successor to him for the propagation of the Faith

Āḷavantār died before Rāmānuja became Ācārya and the interval was filled up by Periya Nampi, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi and other disciples of the late master. One thing which facilitated Rāmānuja's advent to, and Ācāryaship at, Srī Raṅgam was his embracing the monastic life. The *sannyāsa* order enabled him to dedicate himself wholly to the cause of religion and service to humanity. Rāmānuja spent two years studying the teachings of Āḷavantār from the specialists who had been trained by him. Six of Āḷavantār's disciples, as already mentioned, had become the spiritual teachers of Rāmānuja and imparted to him the teachings of

Āḷavantār.[4] While at Kāñci Rāmānuja became attached to Tirukkacci Nampi[5] and learnt from him a few great truths communicated to him by Lord Varadarāja Himself. They were an answer to six doubts in Rāmānuja's mind. They were: "(i) I am the Supreme Truth, the way and the goal; (ii) the world of souls is different from Me and depends on Me as its source and sustenance; (iii) *Prapatti* is the only way to salvation; (iv) the liberation of My devotees, even though they fail to remember Me at the time of death, is sure to take place; (v) as soon as My devotees give up their bodies, they attain the Supreme Object; (vi) choose Periya Nampi for your Ācarya."[6] Periya Nampi was Rāmānuja's principal Ācarya who intiated him[7] in the *pañca-saṁskāra*

---

4. Vatuka Nampi, a disciple of Rāmānuja, refers to five teachers only. (Vide: *Rāmānuja Aṣtottara śata nāma - stotram*, 10). He does not refer to Tirumalai Nampi, even though he refers to him later as the one under whom he studied *Rāmāyaṇa*. But Vedānta Desika, in his *Guruparamparā sāram* omits Tirukkacci Nampi among the five Ācaryas, even though he refers to him previously as one from whom he learnt six truths. Sri P.B. Annangaracharīya accepts the latter's view (vide. *Pūrvācāryap. prabāvam* - Rāmānuja, pp. 23-24) (*Sri Rāmānujaṉ* - 198 (Journal). But Swami Rāma Krishnānanda accepts the former's view (Vide: *Life of Rāmānuja*, p.158).

5. He was a non-brahmin, belonging to the chetti caste and was the native of Pūviruntavalli near Madras. Even now Tirukkacci Nampi's shrines at Tirupati, Kāñci and Pūviruntavalli (his own native place) are managed by trustees belonging to the chetti community only.

6. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 40.

7. It has been said that he initiated Rāmānuja in the name of his ācarya Āḷavantār. It has been revealed by Periya Nampi himself that Āḷavantār had placed his sacred feet on his (Periya Nampi's) head for the sake of Rāmānuja and attained Paramapada, as Rāmachandra had done on Bharata's head when he went to the forest. So it may be said that Āḷavantār is the direct ācarya to Rāmānuja and Periya Nampi is only the medium. This has been confirmed both by *Rāmānuca-nūrrantāti* (verse 21) and *Gītā-bhāsya* (Vide: Invocatory verse and its commentary in Vedānta Desika's *Tātparya-andrika*).. In appreciation of Rāmānuja's concern for the salvation of others as evidenced by his revelation of the *Tirumantra* from the tops of the temple towers at Tirukkōṭṭiyūr made at the risk of hell for himself for disobeying his guru's injuntion, the guru Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi, forgetting all his anger against the

(fivefold Vaisnava rites) and into the esoteric meanings of *Dvaya Mantra* at Maturāntakam by a happy coincidence when both of them wanted to meet each other. The initiation was done under the holy *Vakula* tree near the shrine of Kōtaṇṭa Rāma, called the Lake Guard (*Ērikātta Perumāḷ*). After making eighteen times the journey from Sri Raṅgam to Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Rāmānuja learnt from Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nambi the hidden truths of *Tirumantra* and *Carama-śloka*. He learnt from Periya nampi the three thousand verses of all the Āḷvārs except Nammāḷvār and the meaning of the *Brahma-sūtras*.[8] The compositions of Nammāḷvār and of Maturakavi were studied by him under Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷ Araiyar[9]. Then he acquired from Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ the meaning of *Tiruvāymoli* and of the compositions of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār.[10] The tradition, according to *Guruparamparā*, does not refer here to Maturakavi or Parakāḷa's works. When Rāmānuja happened to sojourn at Tirupati for a year in the house of Tirumalai Nampi (his own maternal uncle), he studied *Vāḷmīki Rāmāyaṇa* under him and understood many esoteric lessons of the first of the *Itihāsas*.[11] Thus the great six who were the most intimate disciples of Āḷavantār, became the teachers of Rāmānuja and taught him many works in the way of traditional interpretation of the scriptures. Trained by each and all of them Yatirāja (the prince of the *sannyāsins*, now became, as it were, the second manifestation of Āḷavantār, for the great saint was present in six parts in his own six disciples. Now these six parts were made one in the frame of Rāmānuja. Thus equipped with the knowledge of spiritual truths and the *sādhanas* to *mukti* gained from the specialists, Rāmānuja

---

disciple for violation of his command. invested Rāmānuja with the title of 'Emperumāṉār' and taught him the creed of Vedānta, which came to be known to the world as 'Emperumāṉār Darśanam'.

8. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 47.
9. ibid. 61.
10. ibid. 62.
11. There is an idol of Srī Rāma even now in the shrine of Tirumala Nampi inside the Govindarāja temple at Tirupati; this, it has been said, signifies that Rāmānuja studied *Rāmāyaṇam* at the feet of Tirumalai Nampi.

became qualified to enter on his mission of spreading the gospel of Viṣiṣṭādvaitic Vaiṣṇavism and to become a world teacher.

Rāmānuja's studentship was now complete; his spiritual greatness was ahead of his intellectual powers. He then began to teach his own disciples Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi*. But a superhuman genius as he was, to the amazement of his disciples, often enough he began to give various new mystic interpretations. During that period, the *Tiruvāymoḷi* became very popular as a religious treatise and possibly the most important work of daily study and recitation among the Vaiṣṇavites. A representation was made to Rāmānuja through Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ, the son of his uncle, Tirumalai Nampi, to write a commentary to *Tiruvāymoḷi*. Rāmānuja charged Piḷḷāṉ himself to do the task with a view to creating an interest in the study of the sacred work of the great Āḷvār. Tirukkuru-kaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ, as a true disciple of Rāmānuja, undertook the rather difficult project and composed an authoritative gloss on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as taught and expounded by his venerable master Rāmānuja. This commentary is known as *Ārayi-rap-paṭi* (Six Thousand) as it was completed in 6000 *granthas*.[12] His determination of the number of *paṭis* reflects his devotion to Lord Viṣṇu whose story is told in 6000 *granthas* in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*. This commentary is the earliest and, in some respects, the best commentary on the hymns of Nammāḷvār. It was the model on whieh many compositions were later written, particularly in the *maṇipravāḷa* or Sanskrit–Tamil mixed style. Thus Rāmānuja fulfilled his first vow in the preparation of Nammāḷvār's name and glory.[13]

Rāmānuja is said to have fulfilled his second vow of perpetuating Parācara's name by giving it to the elder son of his friend and follower, Kūrattāḷvāṉ, and directed him to compose a commentary on the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma*. Parācara Paṭṭar completed the sacred task in compliance with his

12. According to a principle of Grammar 32 *granthas* or letters omitting the consonants make one *paṭi*.

13. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 84.

masters's instructions and the commentary is known as *Bhagavadguṇadarpaṇa*.[14] Rāmānuja fulfilled his third vow by his ***magnum*** *opus*, the immortal *Sri Bhāṣya*[15], which is an authoritative exposition of the Vyāsa's *Brahma-sūtra* as *Sari-raka Sāśtra* in the true sense of the term. He is said to have gone as far as Kaṣmīr in order to copy the *Vṛitti* or commentary of Bōdhāyana which interpreted the *Brahma-sūtra* in the Visiṣtādvaita mode It is said that Kūrattāḷvāṉ assisted Rāmānuja in his writing of *Srī Bhāṣya*. In this way the dream of Āḷavantār to formulate Visiṣtādvaitic Vaiṣṇavism became an accomplished fact. But the *Guruparamparā-prapāvam* of Piṉpaḷakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar gives a different account of Āḷavantār's wishes viz , (i) Gratefulness to Vyāsa and Parācara for the help they rendered to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism; (ii) Deep love for Nammāḷvār; and (iii) Writing a commentary on Vyāsa's *sūtras* in the light of Visiṣtādvaita.[16] The third wish of Āḷavantār was fulfilled by Rāmānuja by writing the *Srī Bhāṣya*, *Vedānta-sāra*, *Vedānta-dipika* and *Bhagavad-gitā-bhāṣya*.[17] The elder son of Kūrattāḷvāṉ was named Parācara Paṭṭar by Rāmānuja and thus the second wish was fulfilled. Siṛiya Gōvindap-perumāḷ, younger brother of Empār, had a son born to him and he was named Parāṅkuśa Nampi and thus the third was fulfilled.[18] There is some discrepancy, no doubt, in this source regarding the order in which the wishes are mentioned and are stated to have been fulfilled. Besides, here is a reference to the commentary on *Tiruvāymoḷi*.

The works of Rāmānuja are as valuable as his life, and they were the fulfilment of his promise, as observed above, to carry out the message of Āḷavantār to systematise the whole teaching of Visiṣtādvaita in its metaphysical, moral and mystical aspects. His reputation was mainly due to the systematisation of the contributions of the earlier writers to his system and his own invaluable contribution to the cardinal

14. ibid. 80.
15. ibid. 72.
16. G.P.P. p. 104.
17. ibid. p. 140.
18. ibid. p. 145. cf. Uttama Nampi's *Lakṣmī-kāvya*

doctrines of the system. He is known as the author of seven works viz., *Vedānta-saṅgraha, Srī Bhāṣya, Vedānta-dīpa, Vedānta-sāra, Nitya, Bhagavadgitā bhāṣya* and *Gadyatraya.* Of these, the earliest one was the *Vedārtha-saṅgraha* which is in the form of lectures delivered by him in front of the Lord Srīnivāsa, the presiding deity of the Tirumalai Hills. This is an elaborate essay on the teachings of the principal *Upaniṣads*, in which he analyses the defects of the systems of Saṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāsa and harmonises the apparently conflicting texts of the *Upaniṣads* by his foundational principles of *sarīra-sarīri* relation. His *magnum opus*, the immortal *Srī Bhāṣya*, is an authoritative exposition of *Vedānta-sūtras.* In this work the Visiṣṭādvaita philosophy is expounded. It is less intellectual and more emotional than the philosophy of Saṅkara. While Saṅkara taught idealism, Rāmānuja is an advocate of realism. While the former is for a pantheistic neuter Brahman, the latter advocates a personal deity possessed of all auspicious attributes and capable of granting salvation to devotees in reward for their devotion. The individuality of the *jīva* is preserved in the Rāmānuja's system even after *mokṣa* while it is lost in Brahman according to Advaitta. The *Vedānta-dīpa* is a brief commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras.* In the introductory verse, after prayer (*maṅgala-śloka*), Rāmānuja states that following the path shown by the preceptors, he is illumining the subject matter of the *Vedānta* as it is available in the words used in the *Brahma-sūtras.* This approach perhaps suggested to the author the title *Vedānta-dīpa* for this work The scope and nature of the Visiṣṭadvaita system are given at the outset in a highly illuminating passage. The *Vedānta-sāra* is also a concise commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras.* After the invocatory song, the author states that he is presenting the quintessence of *Vedānta*, through the Grace of the Supreme Person. After explaining the meaning of the first *sūtra*, Rāmānuja gives a brief survey of the Visiṣṭādvaita system by citing the relevant *sūtras* and *upaniṣadic* authorities in the proper context. In another prose work called *Nitya* Rāmānuja elaborates the ideal of the daily life of a true *paramaikāntin* and lays the procedure for worshipping the Lord.

The *Gadyatraya* and the *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya* deserve separate treatment since they contain the quintessence of *prapatti*, the most important dogma of Vaiṣṇavism. The former is a work in prose which consists of three divisions or independent pieces called *Saraṇāgati-gadya* or *Pṛthu-gadya*, *Sri Raṅga-gadya* and *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya*. The first mentioned work begins with the self-surrender made to Lakṣmī who is considered to be the mother of all, the refugee for the destitutes. The author then makes the offering of the self at the Feet of the Lord. He addresses the Lord in such of those epithets which speak of this glory as the only refuge for the individual selves. In the *Srī Raṅga-gadya*, Rāmānuja requests the Lord of Srī Raṅga to enable him to serve Him for all times. He takes refuge under the Lord. The *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya* is a rapturous outpouring on the transcendental beauty and bliss of Vaikuṇṭha. The author directs every individual to surrender himself to the Lord. Having done that, he has to constantly think and ponder over it in order to better his own future. He shall pray to the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha and shall attend on Him. He shall mediate with the Lord's Feet placed on his head and live in peace. The five limbs of the act of self-surrender, the greatness of the Lord and the need to acquire the spirit of self-surrender and all other matters are dealt with in this *Gadyatraya*.

The *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya* is a development of the *Gitārtha-saṅgraha* of Āḷavantār and explains the building up of *bhakti* and constructs a ladder as it were from the world of *prakṛti* to the realm of *Puruṣottama*. Rāmānuja opens his commentary with a reference to his concept of duty. Brahman has no defects and is an ocean of merits. He is the Lord of Lakṣmī. He is beyond the reach of speach and mind. He is Nārāyaṇa. He is the creator of all. He descends to the world and being worshipped by the peoples rewards them with the fourfold results. Under the pretext of relieving the earth of its undue burden, He comes down and becomes visible to the mortal eyes. His acts are captivating to the minds of all people, high and low. He makes many people very pious. Under the pretext of inducing Arjuna to fight, He taught the course of devotion as the means for obtaining the highest pur-

suit in life. This course is dealt with in the *Vedānta* and is to be developed through knowledge and acts. Devotees of God have their minds fixed on Him, could not live without Him, and they talk to each other about the qualities and delightful deeds of God of which they had personal experience.[19] The *Bhagavad-gīta* is an authoritative text on self-surrender. All these great works are ever-enduring monuments of Rāmānuja's synthetic genius.

While learning the significant meanings of the composition of the Āivārs, Rāmānuja is said to have suggested better and different interpretations improving upon those of Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ. He is said to have averred that Yāmuna's interpretation was the same as that which was given by him. Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ could not get reconciled at this, as he was a direct disciple of Yāmuna, from whom he learnt the interpretation of Nammālvār's compositions. Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi, who came to mediate between the two, agreed with Rāmānuja's interpretation and recognized it to be that which was offered by Yāmuna.[20] For instance, there is a passage in the *Nālāyiram* in which Nammāḷvār treats himself as a beloved of the Lord (Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki) and conveys a message to Him through the stark to the effect that she is pining out of love for Him. The Lord is referred to as Vāmana and the word '*kaḷvaṉ*' (thief) is used in the text. Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ interpreted this word as '*vañcakaṉ*' (cheat) meaning thereby that Vāmana deceived Bali by assuming a huge form and measuring everything as though belonging to Him. Rāmānuja did not approve of the sense of cheat for the word but explained it as meaning one who thought of doing one thing but did something else.[21]

The first decad of the second centum is devoted to an appeal to the Lord for refuge. There is the element of bridal mysticism in this. Yāmuna states that the devotee who is a beloved to the Lord has languished losing all her usual lustre

---

19. Bh. G. 10: 9.
20. G.P. pp. 124, 125.
21. *Īṭu* on TVM, 1.4: 3.

and cannot also cry aloud. The Āḷvār Nāyaki asks how long He would be teasing her, treating her as though she were His enemy and hoping to get delight at the destruction of such an enemy. Rāmānuja says that even enemies would show their compassion on those who are distressed. There is no enmity, really speaking, between the devotee and the Lord. The Lord is more cruel to the devotee than He would be to His enemy.[22] While interpreting a verse[23] Yāmuna explained that He produced in the devotee the knowledge of his relation to Him at a time when he was not wise and later produced for him a body which would destroy that knowledge. Rāmānuja, hearing this interpretation, refers to the verses which precede and follow this and declares that they refer to the feeling of delight that the devotee has for the kind things he has received from God and so this verse cannot be interpreted in the context to mean grief and disappointment which the devotee is said to be experiencing. The better interpretation must therefore, says Rāmānuja, be that the Lord had shown His affection by providing His devotee with the spirit of service even when he was not grown wise. In the case of the verse, TVM. 3.3: 6, Yāmuna interprets that if the word '*namah*' is uttered with reference to the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, all the deeds done with the help of the body would get destroyed. Rāmanuja remarked that the deeds already done and those which are likely to be done in the future would also get destroyed.[24] While interpreting the phrase '*pukaḻum poru-paṭai*' in the verse, TVM. 8.9: 3, Yāmuna says that the divine weapons of the Lord would sing His praise. Rāmānuja interptets it that the enemies too would praise the Lord Who has the weapons with Him. The last line of the verse, TVM. 9.5: 10, according to Yāmuna's interpretation, means that the devotee feels despondent unable to join the Lord, and intending to die wishes the country to become happy and flourishing. But Rāmānuja, interpreting it in a different way, says that the devotee wishes that the country is to be spared the torments

22. ibid. 2.1.
23. ibid on TVM. 2.3: 3.
24. cf. T.Pv. 5. (last line).

which he was made to endure.[25] While interpreting the hymn, TVM. 1.2, Yāmuna took this as dealing with the doctrine of self-surrender Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ taught this to Rāmānuja who, after writing out the *Sri Bhāṣya*, interprets this as conveying the doctorine of devotion. How far could this interpretation become acceptable has been discussed in the previous chapter Again with reference to TVM. 3.7, Rāmānuja lays stress on the need to be in contact with the devotees of God and remarks that this has been dealt with in the hymn under reference. Ṣatrughna is stated by Rāmānuja to have put into practice the contents of TVM. 3.7. and TVM. 8.10. Moreover, Rāmānuja is said to have witnessed the recitation of a hymn in *Tiruvāymoḷi* with gesticulations by Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷ Araiyar,[26] and enjoyed it keenly.

That Rāmānuja was much influenced by the compositions of the Āḷvārs and that his way of life was shaped by the teachings of the Āḷvārs are amply borne out by the copious references which are contained in the *Rāmānucanūṟṟantāti*. Nammāḷvār's compositions played a significant role in enabling Rāmānuja to build the religious system of Vaiṣṇavism. They sing the greatness of the innumerable auspicious qualities of Viṣṇu Rāmānuja therefore bowed to the feet of this Āḷvār and lived a glorious life through his dependence on this Āḷvār.[27] Nammāḷvār's compositions represented to him prosperity of this world and of Vaikuṇṭha, parents and the Lord, nay everything for him.[28] Rāmānuja demonstrated through his teachings that this is the Truth.[29] He would be constantly thinking of Nāthamuni who set the *Tiruvāymoḷi* to music.[30] He enshrined that *Tamil Veda* in the temple of his devotion which means that he treasured it very

---

25. For similar references see *Īṭu* on 2.3: 1; 2.5: 1; 2.9: 8; 2 10: 4; 5.1:9; 5.2: 6: 6.1: 10; 7.2: 10; 7 9: 1; 9 4 3 etc.
26. *Īṭu* on TVM 5.2. For further similar instances vide *Īṭu* on TVM. 8.7: 3; 9.7: 5, 9 8: 1.
27. R.N. 1.
28. *Śtotraratna*, 5.
29. R.N. 19.
30. ibid. 20.

highly and his devotion assumed a definite and refined shape by this composition.[31] The compositions of Nammāḷvār challenged, countered and suppressed the preachings of the six schools of thought. Rāmānuja unterstood this significant contribution made by the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[32] The *Vedas* and the compositions of Parāṅkuśa flourished through the work of Rāmānuja.[33] Rāmānuja's contribution to the propagation of the importance of *Tiruvāymoḷi* is poetically described by Amutaṉār. The venerable saint's presence is felt wherever the *jñānis* perform their *yōga*, wherever the musical notes of *Tiruvāymoḷi* are heard, and wherever the Lord with Lakṣmī in his chest takes His abode.[34]

Amutaṉār speaks then of Rāmānuja's indebtedness to Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. Rāmānuja did not even care to think of people who were not devoted to the Lord at Srī Raṅgam and was ever devoted to the feet of Tirumṅkaiyāḷvār,[35] who composed hymns in praise of the Lord at Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkai.[36] He acquired his strong skill in disputation by his deep study and realization of what this Āḷvār taught in his musical compositions This must be a reference to his *Peria-tirumoḷi*. This Āḷvār is referred to as learned in arts which may include *sāstras* also.[37]

Rāmānuja cherished the composition of Poykaiyār who lit a lamp for dispelling ignorance in the world;[38] and of Pūtattār for dispelling the internal darkness.[39] He was ever praising the feet of Pēyāḷvār who was an eminent Tamil scholar and who visualized the Lord with Lakṣmī [40] He was

31. ibid. 29.
32. ibid. 46.
33. ibid. 54.
34. ibid. 60.
35. ibid 2.
36. ibid. 17.
37. ibid. 88
38. ibid. 8.
39. ibid. 9.
40. ibid. 10

even bowing to the feet of Tiruppāṇāḻvār[41] and had his heart occupied by the feet of Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār.[42] He does not have liking for anything but the feet of Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḻvār, who offered garlands to the Lord Raṅganātha and composed two poems which are equal to *Vedas*.[43] He praises the feet of the elders who sing the hymns of Kulacēkarāḻvār.[44] The mind of the saint fixes in the feet of Periyāḻvār who offered benediction (*maṅgalāsāsana*) to the Lord on account of his undying immense whirlpool of love.[45] Rāmānuja lives and is ever dependent upon the grace of Āṇṭāḷ who offered the garland to Lord Raṅganātha after wearing it herself.[46]

It is said that Rāmānuja recited *Pallāṇṭu* the hymn of Periyāḻvār when he went to offer his services to Raṅganātha, Srīnivāsa, Varadarāja and Selvap-piḷḷai at Śrī Raṅgam,[47] Tirumalai,[48] Kāñci[49] and Tirunārāyaṇapuram[50] respectively. He is said to have taught the *Nālāyiram* to Aruḷāḷap-perumāḷ Emperumāṉār who was Yajñamūrti, an Advaitin, and who assumed this name after he became a Vaiṣṇavite and disciple of Rāmānuja bearing this name.[51]

Anantāḻvāṉ, one of the disciples of Rāmānuja, speaks of him as ever cherishing the *Tamil Veda* composed by Nammāḻvār.[52] Parācara Paṭṭar speaks of Nammāḻvār as the mother who delivered the 'Thousand verses' and Rāmānuja was the foster-mother who gave milk to them, which shows

---

41. ibid. 11.
42. ibid. 12.
43. ibid. 13.
44. ibid. 14.
45. ibid. 15.
46. ibid. 16.
47. G.P. p. 114.
48. ibid. p. 134.
49. ibid. p. 131.
50. ibid. p. 163.
51. ibid. 129.
52. Vide: A verse beginning with words '*Ēynta peruṅkīrti*' composed by him in praise of Rāmānuja.

that Rāmānuja was responsible for the propagation of *Tiruvāymoḻi*[53] It is also said that what Nammāḻvār composed was cherished in the heart by Rāmānuja.[54]

Rāmānuja composed '*taṉiyaṉs*' for the compositions of some Āḻvārs. In the verse composed for Kulacēkarāḻvār's *Perumāḷ-tirumoḻi,* he addresses a parrot to come near him to take the nectar which he would be offering to it. The nectar is uttering the name of Kulacekarāḻvār, the powerful king of the Cēras, attractive to damsels, who would sing the praise of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam.[55] Evidently he means that the parrot could easily repeat the word '*raṅga*' as it is generally found to do so and with ease repeat also the word 'kulacēkarar'. This may be taken to be a reference to the verse in praise of this Āḻvār according to which there is the loud announcement of undertaking pilgrimage to Śrī Raṅgam made daily in his city.[56] To the *Periya-tirumoḻi* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār Rāmānuja composed a '*taṉiyaṉ*'[57] which wishes a long life for the Āḻvār who was the god of Death for others who were opponents of the Āḻvār in spiritual matters and political matters as well. The Āḻvār who removed the evil effects of the *Kali* age shall live long. He who was the king of Kuraiyalūr the region which he ruled over, may live long. May the Āḻvār live long who obtained initiation in the sacred *mantra* from the Lord Himself on the point of his sword at Him to deprive the latter of His possessions.[58] His place is called Tirumaṅkai and so he is referred to as the ruler of that place. May the big and shining weapon of the person who was pure live long with him. In the '*taṉiyaṉ*' for the Nammāḻvār's *Periya-tiruvantāti*[59] Rāmānuja addresses

---

53. Vide Pattar's '*taṉiyaṉ*' biginning with the words '*Vāṉ tikaḻum*'.
54. Vide his '*taṉiyaṉ*' beginning with the words '*tilatamulakukkaṇa*'
55. This verse begins with the words '*innamutam ūṭṭukēn*'.
56. This refers to the Sanskrit verse beginning with the words '*ghuṣyate yasya nagare*'. This is a verse in praise of Kulacēkarar recited at the beginning of *Mukundamāla*, a lyrical poem composed by Kulacēkarar in praise of Viṣṇu.
57. It begins with the words '*Vāli parakālaṉ*'.
58. For this incident vide G.P. p. 50.
59. This begins with the words '*munturṟa neñcē*'.

his mind which generally goes in advance at the object that is sought to be obtained, to utter the name of Nammāḷvār. He asks it to take interest in him to represent to the Āḷvār his miserable condition and bless him, after bowing to the Āḷvār. The mind shall freely praise the Āḷvār who is the lord of Kurukūr which is encircled with groves of sandalwood trees having the flow of honey and has nearby the river Tāmraparaṇi.

The four thousand verses of the Āḷvārs deal in the main with the exploits of Viṣṇu in His divine descent (*avatāra*) and with the *arcā* form enshrined in the temples. Much of the matter which has philosophical significance is contained mostly in the compositions of Nammāḷvār. On the whole, all the verses, with some notable exceptions, are addressed directly to the deities concerned. The *Sri-Bhāṣya*, the *Vedānta-sāra*, and the *Vedānta-dīpa* which deal with materials which bear philosophical import do not appear to have been much influenced by the compositions of the Āḷvārs. The *Gītā-bhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya*, the latter in particular, bear ample testimony to the influence of the *Nālāyiram*. Rāmānuja addresses God, in the *Saraṇāgati-gadya*[60] as mother, father, relation, as preceptor, learning, wealth and everything else. This has the influence of the passage of Nammāḷvār which states that the Lord is the father and mother of the world and also for him.[61] In the *Srī-Bhāsya*, Rāmānuja explains the meaning of the words '*existent*' and '*non-existent*'. '*Existence*' means that the thing which is said to exist has name and form while '*non-existence*' when applied to it implies its subtle status and does not mean its non-existence [62] This shows the influence of Nammāḷvār's verse[63] which means that God is in subtle form when He is said not to exist, and to exist in the gross form. God is referred to

60. S.G. 174.

61. TVM. 1. 10: 6; cf ibid. 2.3: 2 where God is equated with life; 2 6: 10 with time also and 5.7: 7. There is a passage in the *Srī-Vaikuntha-gadya* similar to this. Vide p. 180.

62. S.B. 2.1: 18.

63. TVM. 1.1: 9.

by Rāmānuja to possess features which are distinct from those of everything else.[64] Nammāḷvār influenced Rāmānuja here though his description of God as being different from soul and matter[65] In his *Bhagavad-gītāa-bhāsya* Rāmānuja's reference to God as the form of knowledge and bliss[66] points to its indebtedness to the composition of Nammāḷvār.[67] God is of the nature of knowledge and His nature is immeasurable or could not be gauged.[68] The same sense is conveyed by a passage from *Periya-tirumoḻi.*[69] Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār refers to God as 'Sāmiyappaṉ'[70] which means that God is protector and this could perhaps have influenced Rāmānuja's idea of God as bent only on protecting the world.[71] Rāmānuja's reference to Nīḷa as the consort of Viṣṇu[72] bears the influence of the *Nālāyiram* which mentions Nappiṉṉaip-pirāṭṭi who is identified with Nīḷa.[73]

Āṇṭāḷ describes how she worshipped the Lord at Tirumāliruñcōlai. She offered butter and a preparation of rice cooked with jaggery in a hundred big vessels each[74]. On realizing the significance of this verse Rāmānuja went to Tirumāliruñcōlai and made the offerings to the Deity as Āṇṭāḷ described and then visited Srivillip-puttūr to worship Āṇṭāḷ. Āṇṭāḷ was much pleased with the way in which Rāmānuja carried out what she wrote, and conferred on him the name 'Nam Kōil Aṇṇaṉ' which means that she treated Rāmāṉuja as her elder-brother residing at *Kōil* (Srī Raṉgam). He behaved thus like her elder-brother in fulfilling her

---

64. S.G. p. 174.
65. TVM. 1.2: 4.
66. Bh. G.B. P.1 (Introduction).
67. TVM. 10.10: 10; 1.1: 2; 9.2: 3; 10.10: 10.
68. Bh. G.B. p.1 (Introduction).
69. Peri. Tm. 3.8: 1.
70. ibid. 2.2: 7.
71. Benedictory verse in the S.B.
72. S.G. p. 174.
73. T.Pv. 20.
74. Naç. Tm. 9: 6.

cherished desire.[75] Rāmānuja was so much fascinated by a verse of Āṇṭāḷ's *Tiruppāvai*[76] that he came to be called 'Tiruppāvai Jīyar'.[77]

Āndhra-pūrṇa (Vaṭuka Nampi), one of the disciples of Rāmānuja, refers to his preceptor as one who knew the essence of the two *Vedāntas*,[78] one of them being based on the *Upaniṣads* and the other on Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi*. This shows that not only was the composition of Nammāḷvār treated as one of the two *Vedāntas*, but Rāmānuja was proficient in both, though he did not write himself any treatise on the compositions of Nammāḷvār. From other references in the other works of Vaṭuka Nampi, it is found that during the period of Rāmānuja, a festival was conducted at Srī Raṅgam for the compositions of Nammāḷvār. This had to be given up owing to external pressure when Rāmānuja was away from Srī Raṅgam to escape persecution at the hands of Kulōttuṅka. On his return to Srī Raṅgam he revived this festival by installing the idol of Nammāḷvār.[79] The festival was conducted for twenty days and was called *Adhyayana festival*.[80] He then admitted after approval *Rāmānucanūṟṟantāti* composed in his honour by Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār as part of the Four Thousand verses of the Āḷvārs. Then he installed the idols of other Āḷvārs and Āṇṭāḷ in the temple at Srī Raṅgam.[81]

Such was Rāmānuja's interest in the *Nālāyiram* and its propagation that he came to be placed on an equal footing with the Āḷvārs. Hence his name is mentioned along with the names of Āḷvārs in a '*taṉiyaṉ*' which begins with the

---

75. G.P. p.167; Āndhra-pūrṇa's *Rāmānuja Aśtōttraśatanāma stotra*, 26; *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 106. Āṇṭāḷ is therefore referred to *Perumputtūr māmunikkup-piṉṉāṉāl* (Appiḷḷai's '*Vālit-tirunāmam*', 12).

76. T.Pv. 18.

77. Owing to intense interest in the poem he came to be known by convention as Tiruppāvai Jīyar.

78. *Rāmānuja Aṣtottraśatanamaśtotra*. 6.

79. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 104.

80. ibid. 105.

81. ibid. 106.

words *bhutam saraśca*'.[82] Vedānta Desika aptly included in his *Pirapanta-cāram*, a verse in praise of this synoptic philosopher mentioning the *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* of Amutaṉār.[83] In another verse too, the name of the saint occurs along with those of other Āḷvārs.[84] He is really '*uṭaiyavar*' or the owner of the two worlds and this truth expresses the Srīvaiṣṇava loyalty to the great ācārya and their living faith in him as the preceptor that holds the keys of earth and heaven. In brief "he was not merely the representative of his age but a philosopher for all time who combined in himself the profundity of a thinker and the humility of a saint With his magnetic personality, encyclopaedic knowledge and brilliant powers of exposition, he summed up in his long life all that was good in the known past, namely, the heart of Buddha, the head of Saṅkara and the apostolic fervour of the Semitic religions. Even after ten centuries of his passing away, the dynamic influence of *bhakti* that was created in his life-time is not only not exhausted, but is ever on the increase."[85]

82. The Sanskrit verse was composed by Parācara Paṭṭar. It is recited before the recitation of any part of *Nālāyiram* is undertaken.

83. T.P. 380.

84. ibid. 383.

85. *The Philosophy of Visiṣṭādvaita*, p. 519.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ĀḶVĀRS AND THE FOLLOWERS OF RĀMĀNUJA

Rāmānuja, at the close of his career, devoted his main attention to the consolidation of his missionary work. He remained at Śrī Raṅgam and organised temple worship on the basis of Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas* and made the hymns of the Āḷvārs part and parcel of daily whorship in the temples. The steps which Rāmānuja took in order to popularise his teachings indicate that he was as great a practical organizer as he was a synoptic thinker. He divided the Vaiṣṇavite world into a number of Ācaryic dioceses, and appointed pious householders who were his disciples as heads, or *simhāsanādhipatis* as they were called, to popularise Vaiṣṇavism and Visiṣṭādvaita. These spiritual leaders took up the task of teaching the Vaiṣṇavite religion and philosophy in the villages and homes throughout the length and breadth of this holy land.

(I) *The followers of Rāmānuja*

KŪRATTĀḶVĀṆ: Rāmānuja had, during his life time, in Kūrattāḷvāṉ, a comrade, scholar and a disciple deeply devoted to him, who was also known as Śrī Vatśaṅka miśra. He became a disciple of Rāmānuja when the latter assumed the ascetic order of life and was living at Kāñci[1] and studied *vedānta* under him.[2] He assisted Rāmānuja in writing the *Śrī Bhāṣya*[3]. According to one version he accompanied Rāmānuja to Kāṣmīr and studied *Bodhāyana-vṛtti*, a gloss on the *Brahma-sūtras* which was available only there. He committed the whole *Vṛtti* to memory when the authorities in charge of the manuscript did not permit Rāmānuja to take it with him. He helped Rāmānuja in writing the *Śrī*

1. G.P. p.109.
2. ibid. p.111.
3. ibid. pp.139 and 140.

Bhāṣya by reciting the relevant passages of the *Vṛtti*.[4] When Rāmānuja was ordered by Kulōttuṅka to appear before him and admit Śiva's supremacy, Kūrattāḷvāṉ apprehended insecurity to Rāmānuja's person through persecution at the hands of the king. He had his plain clothes exchanged for the ascetic robes of Rāmānuja and appeared before the king and had to lose his eyes when he was not able to create conviction in favour of Viṣṇu in the mind of the king who refused to be convinced. His devotion to the Lord was such that he was able to visualise the divine vision of Lord Varadarāja at Kāñci and describe Him to Rāmānuja.[5]

Kūrattāḷvāṉ wrote *Pañcastava* which comprises (i) *Śrī Vaikunṭhastava*, (ii) *Atimānuṣastava*, (iii) *Sundarabāhustava*, (iv) *Varadarājastava*, and (v) *Śrīstava* which are respectively in praise of the Lord in Vaikunṭha, the supreme exploits of the Lord, Śrī Sundararaja in Tirumāliruñcōlai, Śrī Varadarāja in Kāñci and Goddess Lakṣmī. His devotion to Nammāḷvār is revealed in his reference to the feet of the Āḷvār as adorning the heads of people who are proficient in the three *Vedas*. It is treated as the eternal wealth belonging to the enlightened people and as the holy refuge for people who are without shelter.[6] The Āḷvār is fancied to be the boundless ocean which is filled with the sweet water of devotion that is animated by his marvellous compositions rich in love for God. This ocean is a treasure house containing the gems in the form of meanings of the *Veda* and is the divine abode for Viṣṇu.[7] These two passages show that the compositions of the Āḷvār are the *Vedas* themselves and are held in great respect by those who are proficient in the *Vedas*. The holy Feet of Śrī Raṅganātha are described to dwell in the mind of the holy saint Saṭhakōpa and as immersed in the devotion of the Āḷvār.[8] The *kiṉṉara* women set the compositions of Saṭhakōpa to the appropriate *svaras*, and sentiments, and began

4. ibid. p.140.
5. ibid. pp.116, 150.
6. *Vaikunthastava*, 2.
7. ibid. 3.
8. *Atimānuṣastava*, 3.

to sing them in the slopes of the hills at Tirumāliruñcōlai. At this, even the stones in the hills melted.[9] Kūrattāḻvāṉ finds no difference between the presentations of Viṣṇu in *arcā* form in several sacred shrines. For instance, Kallaḻakar, in this shrine is identified with Śrī Raṅganātha[10] and Śrī Śrīnivāsa,[11] and Srī Varadarāja[12] and also with the Deity reclining in the milky ocean.[13] This concept of the Deity is peculiarly Vaiṣṇavite in its nature and is found evolved out of the similar treatment found in the compositions of the Āḻvārs.[14] He asks Śrī Varadarāja which place His Lotus-Feet find most comfortable, from among the four – the heart of the people, the *Upaniṣad*, head of Saṭhakōpa and Hastigiri (at Kāñci).[15] He appeals to Śrī Varadarāja for His Grace, as he had taken shelter under Rāmānuja, a lamp for the family of Yāmunamuni who came in the line of Nāthamuni. Nāthamuni was a member of the family of Saṭhakōpa who was a servant of Lakṣmī and Śrī Varadarāja. Here Kūrattāḻvāṉ means that Nāthamuni was the spiritual descendant of Saṭhakūpa.[16]

Kūrattāḻvāṉ composed two *taṉiyaṉs*[17] in praise of the perceptors and Rāmānuja and one[18] for recitation before *Periya-tirumoḻi* is taken up for singing. The latter tells us that the compositions of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār contain the five features of Tamil poetry, namely, *eḻuttu, coḻ, poruḷ, yāppu* and *aṇi*. They would act on the systems of others like fire on cotton wool. They are like lamps dispelling the internal

---

9. *Sundarabāhustava*, 12.
10. ibid. 119.
11. ibid. 117.
12. ibid. 118, 126 and 127.
13. ibid. 119.
14 cf. M. Tv. 76, 77; Mu. Tv. 61, 62.
15. *Varadarājastava*, 59.
16. ibid. 102.
17. Both are in Sanskrit. One of them begins with the words *'Lakṣmīnāthasamārambhām'* and the other with *'Yōnityamacyūta'*.
18. This is in Tamil and begins with the words *'Neñcukku iruḷ'*.

darkness and are nectar to counteract the effects of the poison of life in this world.

The works of Āḻvāṉ show the extent to which he was inspired by the works of earlier writers belonging to Vaiṣṇavisam. The existence of the entire world is dependent on the will of God,[19] and could not be changed or cancelled by any one.[20] That the devotees of God are to be worshipped with fervour gets emphasis in the works of the Aḻvārs[21] and this influenced Kūrattāḻvāṉ in describing the devotees of God as ever wishing to be subordinates to other devotees. It is said here that such people are in fact the deities for this devoted soul.[22] There is reference to the four-fold *vyūha* doctrine with the six qualities present in Vāsudeva and two each among the other three.[23] The path of self-surrender is the course to be adopted by the selves who wish to get *mokṣa*.[24] The Lord has nothing to be sought after. Creation, maintenance and destruction of the world take place at His free will. He descends down to the earth to mingle freely with His devotees who are in various kinds of families.[25] All the positions held by an individual are the results of the serving of God.[26] The Lord dispenses justice to the devotees, creates the worlds and protects them only to please Lakṣmī.[27] The significance of *arcā* is revealed in Āḻvāṉ's describing the Feet of Śrī Kallaḻakar as fascinating with shanks appearing like the lotus stalks, the Feet resembling the lotuses kept upside down.[28] Such charming descriptions of *arcā* form

19. *Śrī Vaikuṇṭhastava*, 36.
20. ibid. 55.
21. I. Tv. 43; Nan. Tv. 91.
22. *Atimānuṣastava*, 77 cf. Periyal. Tm. 4. 4: 10; TVM. 3. 7; 8. 10: 10.
23 *Varadarājastava*, 16.
24. ibid. 84, 92.
25. ibid 64.
26. ibid. 81.
27. *Śrīstava*. 1, 8.
28. *Sundarabāhustava*, 61.

abound in *Sundarabāhustava*,[29] *Śri Vaikunṭhastava*,[30] and *Varadarājastava*[31]. Kūrattāḷvāṉ was in no small measure indebted to Yāmuna's *Śtōtraratna*.[32]

AṈANTĀḶVĀṈ : Among the disciples of Rāmānuja, Anantāḷvāṉ received instructions from his preceptor and went to Tirumalai Hills and dedicated Himself to the service of Lord Śrīnivāsa. He maintained a flower garden for the Lord and was arranging for the daily offering of garlands to the Lord. In a *taṉiyaṉ* composed by him and sung when the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is taken up for recitation, he offers his respects to the great Rāmāuja for making his mind steady for the study of that sacred work, the *Tamil Veda*.[33]

MUTALIYĀṈṬĀṈ : Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ, also known as Dāśarathi, was the nephew and disciple of Rāmānuja. He composed a *taṉiyaṉ*[34] to be sung before *Mutal-tiruvantāti* is taken up for recitation. This verse says that Poykaiyāḷvār was born in the town of Kāñci which was surrounded by groves of the Kētaki (plant with sword-like leaves) plants. This Āḷvār was the best among the poets. He composed an *Antāti* in a hundred verses of fine Tamil in order to make the devotees of the Lord live peacefully. Or, it can mean that they could get life in Vaikunṭha. He explained to Empār, the cousin of Rāmānuja that in the verse, TVM 2.9: 2, Nammāḷvār requests God to put him in the path of devotion (*bhakti*), that is, to help him in being devoted to Him. He says that he could not himself adopt it. Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ says that if one had fallen into a well, it would be better if two persons, instead of one, lift up that person[35] It seems that the Āḷvār

29. cf. ibid. 37 to 53.
30. cf. *Śrī Vaikunṭhastava*. 67 to 74.
31. cf. *Varadarājastava*, 21 to 46.
32. cf. *Śtotraratna*, 29 to 44.
33. This verse begins with '*Ēynta peruṅkīrtti*'. The Sundapalaiyam edition attributes this verse to the authorship of Tirukkurukaippirāṉpiḷḷāṉ. The *Īṭu* on TVM 5. 3: 11 contains a reference to his view on the interpretation of this verse.
34 This begins with the words '*Kaitaicēr*'.
35. *Īṭu* on TVM. 2. 9: 2.

means that Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa should lift him up from bondage. This could be taken as a proof to show that Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa together represent Brahman

KIṬĀMPI ĀCCĀṈ: Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ,[36] also called Praṇatārttihara (of Ātreya gotra), looked after the work of preparing and serving food to Rāmānuja. His proficiency in *Vedanta* was such that he was conferred the title of '*Vedānta Udayaṇa*' by his preceptor Rāmānuja.[37] His *taṉiyaṉ* for Nammāḻvār's *Tiruviruttam*[38] says that people come out of the womb of their mother and fall into the deep pit of sensual love (*kāma*). Then they become old. The author calls upon these people to recite a portion of the *Tiruviruttam* of Nammāḻvār so that what they should get would not be obstructed and they could live in the Vaikuntha.

YAJÑAMŪRTTI: Yajñamūrtti, an Advaita scholar, challenged Rāmānuja for a debate which took place for eighteen days at the end of which he was defeated and became a disciple of Rāmānuja. He entered the order of the ascetics with the name Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ Emperumāṉār. He learnt from Rāmānuja the Four Thousand verses of the Āḻvārs.[39] He composed a *taṉiyaṉ*[40] for Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāciriyam* where he says that the Āḻvār was born in the world for uplifting the suffering humanity and in the *āciriyappā* mode, he explained the intricate meaning of the *Śāstras* which would not otherwise be known.[41] He wrote two works called *Jñānasāram* and *Pramēyasāram*. The former,[42] which is in forty verses in Tamil, deals with

36. He was born in the year *Hēviḷampi* corresponding to 1058 A.D The word '*Kiṭāmpi*' is the corrupt form of the word '*ghatāmbu*' which means water *(ambu)* kept or brought in a jar (*ghaṭa*) Praṇatārttihara, the disciple of Rāmānuja, was asked by Tirukkoṭṭiyūr Nampi to be in charge of serving food to Rāmānuja. He used to take water in the jar for him and hence was known as '*ghaṭāmbu*'.

37. G.P. p.193.

38. This verse begins with the phrase '*karuvirutta*'.

39. G.P. pp.127 to 129.

40. The verse begins with the word '*Kāciṉiyōr*'.

41. His interpretations are cited in *Īṭu* on TVM. 8.1: 6.

42. This is printed with the commentary by Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ.

the doctrine of self-surrender, greatness of Ācārya and the need to render service to God. Any utterence by a devoṭee of God shall be held as authentic, irrespective of nature. The latter work[43] deals with the import of the *Tirumantiram*.

VAṄKIPURATTU NAMPI: He was a disciple of Rāmānuja, and is mentioned as the author of a *Nitya*, a work dealing with the daily routine life of a Vaiṣṇavite. This work, which it now lost, requires a man to follow the *Pāñcarātra* mode of life and worship Hari.[44] Thus shaping one's life, one would not suffer at all.[45] His remarks on some of the passages in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* are referred to in the *Īṭu*.[46] He declared that *arthapañcaka* is the matter dealt with in the *Vedas* and *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[47]

PIḶḶĀI TIRUNAṞAIYŪR ARAIYAR: He was a disciple of Rāmānuja who composed two *taṉiyaṉs* for the two *Maṭals* of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. The one[48] that is to be sung when *Ciṟiya-tirumaṭal* is to be recited states that Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār composed this piece The Āḷvār wears a garland of muḷḷi flowers. He is liberal in gifts without having any feeling of uneasiness (*lit*. the mind blazing forth like the fuel burning at mid-day). He is rich. He is the destroyer of ignorance. He has a lance to fight with others. The other *taṉiyaṉ*[49] is sung before *Periya-tirumaṭal* is taken up for recitation. This is in the words of a bride addressing her lady-companions. The purport of this verse is this: If the Deity at Tirunaṟaiyūr Who is extolled by the denizens of heaven and Goddess Earth does not show pity in seeing her precarious condition, she would take recourse to '*maṭalūrtal*'. Some of his remarks on some of the passages in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* are found recorded in the commentaries. In a verse TVM. 4.9: 8 Nammāḷvār

---

43. Cited by Vedānta Deśika in his RTS. p.853.
44. ibid. pp.499, 813, 1181 and 1182.
45. ibid. p.1365.
46 Vide *Īṭu* on TVM 4.8: 9 and 9.2: 8.
47. Vide Bk I. p. 95.
48. This begins with the words '*Muḷḷic ceḷumalaro*'.
49. This begins with '*Poṉṉulakil*'

appeals to the Lord for his release from this world to attain His Feet in the Paramapada. The phrase "*imaiyōr vāḷ taṉimuṭṭaik kōṭṭai*" in the verse denotes this universe. In a fort, those inside and those outside of it find difficulty in coming in and going out; the ocean of *samsāra* is one similar to that. Araiyar remarks that no one is able to disentangle the intricately woven nest of the sparrow. When therefore the Almighty has woven a net about our soul, in due regard to the acts of every one of us, how can one with no back-bone in him disentangle this net?. Only He can do it when we clasp His holy Feet.[50].

EMPĀR: He was the cousin of Rāmānuja. He was originally known as Govindan. He was converted into a Saivite by Yādavap-prakāsa and was the priest in the temple at Kāḷahasti.[51] His maternal uncle Tirumalai Nampi persuaded him to become a Vaiṣṇavite and brought him to Tirumalai.[52] At the instance of his uncle, he became a disciple of Rāmānuja, and took to the order of ascetics under the name Empār which is a contracted form of the word 'Emperumāṉār' by which Rāmānuja was known. Thus the confusion was avoided which would have been there, had both Rāmānuja and his cousin were to be known by the same name. Empār's devotion to Rāmānuja was intense and inspiring and so was held to represent the shadow of Rāmānuja's feet, thereby meaning that he did not leave his master at any time. No wonder than that he wished to pass away following the death of Rāmānuja and he did so through the Grace of Lord Raṅganātha.[54] It will not therefore be surprising to find him addressing Rāmānuja in a *taṉiyaṉ*[55] which is to be sung before Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's *Periya-tirumoḻi* is taken up for recitation. He appeals here to Rāmānuja as the protector for him and his disciples and as an eminent performer of

50. *Īṭu* on TVM. 4.9: 2
51. G.P. pp. 90–91.
52. ibid. pp.115 to 118.
53. ibid. p. 135.
54. G.P. pp. 196 to 198.
55. The verse begins with the words '*Eṅkaḷ katiyē*'.

penance who safe-guarded the Vaiṣṇavite system from the attacks of rival faiths by clearing all the doubts raised at that time. Rāmānuja is requested to bless him with a mind which could retain the thousand verses of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. He is said to have admired the path of self-surrender for adoption which would be helpful to the individual who takes to it and those belonging to him.[56] This is rather a difficult task, as besides one's own affair, one has to take the responsibility for the uplift of others also. Empār offers an analogy to explain this. A master ordered his servant to bring sesame of a certain quantity. When he found that the servant could not carry it, he ordered him to bring oil of that quantity which is of less weight and so could be easily brought. The path of self-surrender is thus described to be an easier mode for obtaining *mokṣa*.

The later commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* contain much information regarding Empār's views and interpretations of Nammāḷvār's hymns. When a question arose as to who should be treated as the first Spiritual Preceptor for the soul in the lecture-assembly of Empār and in the discussion, some held that the Ācārya shall be treated as the foremost among the preceptors while others opined that the godly man who helps us to take us to the Spiritual Preceptor for acceptance is to be treated to be so. But Empār declared that the Supreme Person who is seated in our hearts and Who unseen, gives us the impulse *not to resist*, but *to yield* to the proposals for good services offered by the visible preceptors or helpers could be taken as the First Preceptor.[57] It will not be difficult for any one who had made a thorough study of the *Vedas* and *śāstras* to determine the nature of the Supreme Being, while many such scholars are still indecisive in arriving at the correct conclusions, the women and men of no learning who have become the followers of Rāmānuja have unflinching faith in the concept of Supreme Being and treat other deities as mere brick or stone of which the hearth is made.[58] The

56. RTS., p. 420.
57. *Īṭu* on TVM. 2 3: 2 cf. Periyāl. Tm. 5.2: 8.
58. ibid. on TVM. 4.10.

Tiruvāymoḻi describes the lot of a devotee[59] which is presented as that of a beloved who is much afflicted with love in separation. The trees also sympathise with her lot. Empār explains how the trees also are affected. Even persons, whose minds are not smoothened by self-control, shed tears at this verse. There need be no doubt regarding the reaction of trees.[60] According to Empār, the self was treated in the first four verses of TVM 8.8 as mode of God and the next four describe the nature of self which could not be separated from God.[61]

PARĀCARA PAṬṬAR : Parācara Paṭṭar, who was the elder son of Kūrattāḻvān, was born in 1122 A.D.[62] and made substantial contribution to Vaiṣṇavism within the short span of his life of twenty-eight years.[63] Since his father passed away while yet he was young, he became the disciple of Empār, the cousin of Rāmānuja. He was a dialectician of high order as is known through his *Tattvaratnākaram* now lost and on independent treatise on Visiṣṭādvaita metaphysics. He is the author of two lyrics, entitled *Śrī Raṅgarājastava*[64] and *Śrī Guṇaratnakōśa* in praise of Lord Raṅganātha and Srī Raṅganāyakī respectively. His *Aṣṭaśloki* brings out the significance of the *Tirumantiram*. His *Bhāgavadguṇadarpaṇa* is a commentary on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*. He calls Saṭhakōpa a sage (*ṛṣi*) who by his insight into the world which has beyond the human understanding visualized the *Tamil Veda*. This *Veda* is called by Parācara Paṭṭar "*Brahmasaṁhitā*" as it is *Veda* and as it deals with Brahman. This *Veda* has thousand recensions and is identical with the *Sāma-veda*. This *Veda* also represents the reality of the yearning to commune with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Parācara

---

59. TVM. 6.5: 9.
60. *Īṭu* on TVM. 6.5: 9. cf. Kālidāsa: *Raghuvamsa* 7: 70.
61. ibid. on TVM. 8.8 : 5.
62. *Satsampradāya Muktāvali* p. 13.
63. Tradition records him to have lived for 28 years. This is questioned. See *History of Sri Vaiṣṇavism.* pp. 40-41.
64. V. 1 : 36 refers to Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār as having built the jewelled halls and ramparts.

Paṭṭar treats the *Tiruvāymoḻi* as *apauruṣeya*.[65] Lord Raṅganātha is described to be shining having been praised by the hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, the latter evidently referring to the hymns of the Āḻvārs.[66] Nammāḻvār and other Āḻvārs are referred to as the foremost among men.[67] There is a *punnaga* tree in the temple at Śrī Raṅgam which Parācara Paṭṭar describes as acquiring its own fragrance as a result of watering it with the thousand verses of Nammāḻvār. It means that the compositions of Saṭhakōpa are frequently recited in the temple and that recitation produces a celestial atmosphere near the place where the *punnaga* tree is situated.[68] The Supreme Person (*Paramapuruṣa*), Who is reclining in Śrī Raṅgam is the same as the Deity lying on the banyan leaf, in the womb of Devaki, at the head of the *Vedas* (*Upaniṣads*), lives with Lakṣmī and is in the body of the compositions of Nammāḻvār.[69] These show that Paṭṭar was much influenced by the compositions of this saint.

Though Parācara Paṭṭar did not leave behind any work in Tamil on the compositions of the Āḻvārs, his views and interpretations are frequently referred to by the later commentators, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītippiḷḷai. They are highly suggestive of the intellectual eminence but are not actually cited by his disciple Nañcīyar in the commentary on *Ārāyirap-paṭi*. On TVM 1.6:1 which tells us that those who worship the Lord offer him water, incense and flowers, Paṭṭar remarks that one of these could be offered and the option must be meant to avoid the devotee from his fingers getting pricked by the thorn while plucking the flowers and that this must be the sense of the passage which declares that a flower which has association with the thorn shall not be offered to the deity.[70] Nammāḻvār states that the decad

65. *ŚrīRaṅgarājastava* 1:6.
66. ibid. 1:16.
67. ibid. 1:41.
68. ibid. 1:49.
69. ibid. 1:78.
70. *Twenty-Four Thousand* on TVM 1.6:1.

TVM 1.6 is free from the three defects, namely, those which pertain to the author, the matter and composition. These defects are denoted by the words '*titu*', '*avam*' and '*ētam*' respectively. There was not a definite and acceptable interpretation for these words which were taken by some scholars to refer to the matter, author and composition respectively. Parācara Paṭṭar interpreted the word '*ētam*' as referring to the composition and the words '*titu*' and '*avam*' as related to the author.[71] Perhaps his intention was to leave aside the matter here. The Lord is the subject matter and it is sacrilegious to mention Him, even though it is sought to be shown that there is no defect pertaining to Him. Nammāḷvār refers in TVM 2.5:10 to the Lord as neither male, nor female nor eunuch and describes Him as having dissimilarities from things known to us. Parācara Paṭṭar describes the word '*allaṉ*' which means 'he is not' as indicative of the Lord Who is *Puruṣōttama*.[72]

Parācara Paṭṭar is the author of two *taṉiyaṉs* in Sanskrit and two in Tamil. The first one in sanskrit is a prayer offered to the Āḷvārs.[73] This mentions ten Āḷvārs and Rāmānuja, who is raised to the status of the Āḷvār due to *Rāmānucanūṟṟantāti* composed in his honour by Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār. The other Sanskrit *taṉiyaṉ* is in praise of Āṇṭāḷ[74] and is recited before *Tiruppāvai* is undertaken for recital. The composition is elegantly worded and is highly suggestive of Parācara Paṭṭar's special liking for, and interest in, this composition. Āṇṭāḷ arouses Kṛṣṇa from His sleep and conveys to Him her existence for another's sake which means that she belongs to Him alone. This suggests that she is the *sēṣa* while He is *sēṣin*. Parācara Paṭṭar remarks that this state of being *sēṣa* is established through the passages in the several *Upani-*

71. *Īṭu* on TVM. 1.6:11.

72. *Twenty-four Thousand* on TVM 2.5:10.

73. This begins with the words '*bhūtam saraśca*'. This is, according to the edition of the *Bhagavad-visayam* edited by A.R. Tiruvenkatachariar, Sundapālaiyam (1912), the composition of Tirukkurukaippiraṉ Piḷḷāṉ.

74. This begins with the words '*nīḷātuṅga*'.

ṣads. This suggests also that Rāmānuja could have been influenced by this aspect of the purport of the *Tiruppāvai* in evolving the concept of *śēṣin* and *śēṣa*, though it is already available in the *Upaniṣads* which Rāmānuja cites for his authority. Āṇṭāḷ wore the garland of flowers and made the Lord wear it and this chained Him, as it were, to be always with her and she enjoyed the communion.

The first *taṉiyaṉ*[75] in Tamil means that the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is in praise of the greatness of Lord Raṅganātha. Nammāḷvār gave expression to them and Rāmānuja nurtured it. Rāmānuja is referred to here as the nurse because of the installation of the idol of Nammāḷvār in many holy shrines, the arrangement for the festival in the month of Mārkaḷi (December-January) when this composition is required to be sung and for directing Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ to write a commentary on this composition of Nammalvar. The other *taṉiyan* in Tamil[76] states that the *Tiruvāymoḷi* conveys the sense of '*arthapañcaka*'. The nature of Brahman which is to be attained is stated at the outset[77] and then the self is stated to be real and eternal. The means which is to be practised to get at Brahman is then stated as that which is consistent with the nature of the self.[78] The sins which were committed in previous births by the self obstruct the self from entering into a desirable phase of life for its betterment. Finally, obtaining the final release is stated to be the goal.[79] Here the word '*vāḷvu*' is used to convey that, according to Nammāḷvār, the goal is marked by a stage of better and conscious living. Parācara Paṭṭar remarks that this is the substance of the teachings of Nammāḷvār whose *Tiruvāymoḷi* is *Veda* itself and is to be sung.

---

75. This beings with the words '*vāṉtikaḷum*'. The Sundapālaiayam edition attributes this to the authorship of Piḷḷāṉ.
76. This verse begins with '*mikka iṟainilaiyum*'. The Sundapālaiyam edition attributes the authorship of this to Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ
77. cf. T.V.M. 4.5 : 11; 4.9 : 10; M.Tv. 86.
78. This may be *bhakti* or *prapatti*.
79. cf. TVM. 10.10 : 11.

Parācara Paṭṭar was equal to his father in composing enchanting religious poetry. The Lord's control over the existence of things is fully brought out when the Supreme Being is identified by him with Lord Raṅganātha.[80] The *vyūha* principle is referred to by making mention of Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha as possessing the respective two qualities[81] The *Pāñcarātra* system prescribes meditation on God in four stages, Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva to be worshipped respectively in each stage.[82] Parācara Paṭṭar says that Lord Raṅganātha has all those *vyūhas* in Himself.[83]

Parācara Paṭṭar's *Śrī Guṇaratnakōsa* is noted for remarkably high poetic fancies. Lakṣmī is auspicious by her very nature and it is through her that the Lord becomes auspicious.[84] While the Lord is in a fix, like a father, unable to decide how best he could guide his children, the offenders, Lakṣmī shows Him that there is none who is free from offence and makes the people share His Grace. Thus she becomes the mother.[85] The author prays to Lakṣmī that she should treat them as the citizens of Mithila, finding delight in serving her.[86] They should be enabled to get God's favour.

The form and freedom are the same for Lakṣmī as in the case of Lord. She is getting included within the Lord for purposes of mentioning and therefore even the *Vedas* do not make a separate reference to her.[87] This makes clear the fact that both Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu form together the principal deity. In every respect they are alike. Wreaking vengeance on the enemy, equanimity and such other traits which belong to men are possessed by Him while Lakṣmī possesses tender-

---

80. *Śrī Raṅgarajastaya*, 2 : 87.
81. ibid. 2 : 39.
82. Introduction to *Lakṣmītantra*, p. 25.
83. *Śrī Raṅgarājastava*, 2 : 40.
84. *Śrī Guṇaratnakōsa*, 29.
85. ibid. 52. cf. ibid. 50.
86. ibid. 51.
87. ibid. 28.

ness, subordination to the husband, compassion and forbearance and other qualities which belong exclusively to women.[88] The Lord is therefore addressed by Parācara Paṭṭar as the ornament of Lakṣmī.[89] Lakṣmī has the confidence and authority for assuring shelter for one who seeks it even without prior consultation with her Lord.[90] Paṭṭar appeals to Lord Raṅganātha for protection. His burden was entrusted at the Feet of the Lord by his preceptors.[91]

Paṭṭar's *Nitya*,[92] a manual of daily conduct of the Vaisnavite and *Lakṣmīkalyāṇa*,[93] a drama depicting the marriage of Laksmī with Viṣṇu are both lost to posterity. In the latter work, the author made Nammāḷvār one of the characters speak of Lakṣmī's greatness Paṭṭar's contribution to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism and to the propagation of the teachings of the Āḷvārs is singular and great. He had the good fortune of receiving the blessings of Rāmānuja.[94].

After the passing away of Rāmānuja there arose two schools for the propagation of the compositions of the Āḷvārs. One of them started from Tirukkuraip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ through his disciple Enkaḷāḷvāṉ. The other was from the same writer through Nañcīyar.[95]

TIRUKKURUKAIP-PIRĀṈ PIḶḶĀṈ:[96] He was the son of Tirumalai Nampi and became the spiritual son (*jñāna putra*) of Rāmānuja. He offered his services to Rāmānuja for writing a commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. Rāmānuja, who was then

88. ibid. 34. cf M.Tv. 67; TVM. 1.3: 6.
89. *Śrī Raṅgarājasatava* 1.9 cf. Peri. Tm. 7.7: 1.
90. *Śrī Guṇaratnakośa*, 50. cf. ibid. 58 where her affection to humanity is revealed.
91. *Śrī Raṅgarājastava*, 2: 102.
92. RTS. p. 1182.
93. Vedānta Deśika: *Sārasāra*, p. 46
94. G.P. p. 189.
95. Vide Appendix VI for the line of succession of Ācāryas in the two schools.
96. He was born in the year *Plavaṅga* corresponding to 1068 A.D.

thinking about how he could fulfil the wish of Āḷavantār, felt surprised at this and embraced him calling him as 'my spiritual son' and directed him to carry out the task, as he was equipped for it being a member of the family of Nāṭhamuni.[97] He did this accordingly and the commentary is known as *Ārāyirap-paṭi.* He was also called the sandals of Rāmānuja.[98] He is considered to be the full moon which arose from the ocean of the king of ascetics meaning that he was the foremost among the disciples of Rāmānuja[99]. Rāmānuja installed him as the sole authority for the two *Vedāntas* which were represented by the *Śrī Bhāṣya* and *Ārāyirap-paṭi.*[100] Thus the line of tradition for both the *Vedāntas* passed down to posterity from Rāmānuja through him. He could rightly be described as the first scholar from whom the tradition of Ubhaya-vedāntācārya started. He composed a *taṉiyaṉ*[101] for the *Iraṇṭām-tiruvantāti.* He bows to the feet of Pūtattār for getting rid of the life here. This Āḷvār offered the composition which begins with the words '*aṉpē takaḷiyā*'. He hails from Māmallapuram, also known as Tirukkaṭalmallai, which abounds in famous pearls which are cool for touch.

ŚRĪ RĀMA PIḶḶAI: He is the younger son of Kūrattāḷvāṉ and a disciple of Rāmānuja and Empār. He composed a *taṉiyaṉ*[102] to *Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti.* The verse appeals to the mind to live peacefully on the strength of the statement of Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār that Nārāyaṇa created Brahmā from whom Śiva was born. The mind shall praise the feet of this Āḷvār.

OTHERS: Among the innumerable disciples of Rāmānuja most of whom were fully conversant with the import of *Nālāyiram,* there were scholars, besides those mentioned above whose views on and interpretation of particular passages are cited by

---

97. *Yatirājavaibhavam,* 81, 82.
98. ibid. 83.
99. G.P. p. 193.
100. *Yatirājavaibhavam,* 108.
101. The verse begins with the words '*eṉ piṟavi tīra*'.
102. This begins with the words '*nārāyaṇaṉ paṭaittāṉ*',

Periyavāccān Piḷḷai in his *Twenty-four Thousand* and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-pillai in his *Īṭū* or *Thirty-six Thousand*. Some of them are Piḷḷai-amutaṉār,[103] Vaṭuka-nampi[104] Ammaṅkiyammāḷ,[105] and Piḷḷaiuraṇkā-villitācar.[106]

Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ's disciple Viṣṇucitta[107] who was also called Eṅkaḷāḷvāṉ, did not write any work on the *Nālāyiram*. His commentary on the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* is the only work that is extant from among his Sanskrit works. His disciple was Vātsya Varadācārya,[108] also known as Naṭātūr Ammāḷ. He was the grandson of Naṭātūr Āḷvāṉ, the nephew and disciple of Rāmānuja. He was the author of many works in Sanskrit, of which mention is to be made of *Pramēyamāla*, *Tattva-sāram* and *Tattva-nirṇayam* which uphold the tenets of Visiṣtādvaita against the contentions of the Advaita and Saiva schools. He was the most authoritative exponent of Rāmānuja's *Śrī Bhāṣya*.[109] There is nothing unexpected in this that Piḷḷāṉ, who was in charge of two *Vedāntas* and under whom Śrī Rāmamiśra (Cōmāciyāṇṭāṉ), a disciple of Rāmānuja, studied *Śrī Bhāṣya* thrice[110] transmitted the *Śrī Bhāṣya* tradition to Eṅkaḷāḷvāṉ without whom, Natātūr Ammāḷ had declared, that he could not have mastered the *Śrī Bhāṣya*.[111] Besides, Natātūr Ammāḷ must have been best gifted to become the most authoritative exponent of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* inheriting the talents of his grand father Naṭātūr Āḷvāṉ who was at the head of those who were taught the *Śrī Bhāṣya* by its author himself.[112] This attracted Sudarśana-sūri the grandson of the

---

103. *Īṭu* on TVM. 6.1: 6. The writer may be Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutaṉār the author of *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti* or Aṇiyaraṅkattu Amutaṉār.
104. G P. pp. (170–171).
105. Vide *Īṭu* on TVM, 5.9: 10; 8.4; 1.
106. Vide ibid. on TVM 6.4: 5; 6.8: 1.
107. He was born in the year *Vijaya* corresponding to 1108 A.D.
108. He was born in the year *Pārthiva* which corresponds to 1165 A.D.
109. His views on certain passages in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* are contained in the *Īṭu*. Vide *Īṭu* on TVM 7.4 : 4; 7.6 : 10; 8.5 : 5.
110. G.P. p. 182.
111. ibid. p. 193, where the *taṉiyaṉ of* Eṅkaḷāḷvāṉ is given.
112. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 71.

brother of Parācara Paṭṭar from Śrī Raṅgam and make him undergo the study of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* under Naṭātūr Ammāḷ. This writer recorded what his preceptor taught him in a work called *Śrutapra-kāśikā*, a commentary on the *Śrī Bhāṣya.*

Ātreya Rāmānuja[113] the third in the descent in the family of Kiṭāmpi Āccān who attended to the preparation of and serving food to Rāmānuja, was a pupil of Vātsya Varadācārya and is the author of a polemical treatise *Nitya-kuliśa.* He had the title *'Vādihamsambuvāha'*, which means the cloud for the swans in the form of disputants. Like the clouds which cause fear to the swans which therefore move to a place were they could be secure from them, Ātreya Rāmānuja was terror to the rival disputants who dared not to face him.

VEDĀNTA DEŚIKA: After Rāmānuja he was the great star in the spiritual horizon. He was the nephew and disciple of Ātreya Rāmānuja. He was born in 1268 A.D. and lived up to 1369 A.D. His name is Vēṅkaṭanātha and he was conferred the titles *'Vedāntācārya'*, *'Kavitārkikasimha'* (the lion of poets and logicians) and *'Sarvatantra-svatantra'* (the master of all arts and sciences) by Lord Raṅganātha and Śrī Raṅganāyakī. He received instructions in the secret doctrines (*rahasya*), *Śrī Bhāṣya, Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Bhagavad-gītābhāṣya* from his uncle Ātreya Rāmānuja. His life was one of unceasing literary activity which bore the result in his writing nearly 115 works. His aim in this pursuit was (i) to establish a solid ground for the teachings of Rāmānuja and Nammāḷvār and (ii) to propagate the doctrines of Visiṣṭādvaita among the people by writing in Sanskrit and Tamil in various forms such as drama, poetry, lyrics and others His works include original works in Tamil, like those of Āḷvārs, and a large number of commentaries. His Tamil works are available under the title *'Tēcikap-pirapantam'*. All these works can be classified under five heads: (i) Panegyrics of a devotional character on different deities or Ācāryas (ii) Poems and drama, (iii)

113. He was born in the year *Vikrama* which corresponds to 1221 A.D.

Treatises for maintaining the Visiṣṭādvaita system by elaboration and criticism (iv) Works in Tamil and Sanskrit reconciling the teachings of the Āḻvārs with those of the *Prasthāna-traya* and (v) Original Tamil poems on Visiṣṭāvaita topics.

Among the twenty-eight Sanskrit lyrics, special mention must be made of the *Yatirājasaptati* which is in praise of Rāmānuja. His prayer to Nammāḻvār[114] here has great significance. It runs thus: We worship Saṭhāri (Nammāḻvār), whose composition that is rendered fragrant by the smell of Vakuḷa flowers is capable of affording rest to the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* got tired of praising Brahman and so declred,[115] "From whom words recede together with the mind without reaching it." The composition of Nammāḻvār appears to ask the *Vedas* to take rest and then itself take up the description of God and achieve success also there. It is also shown here that there is need to recite the names of earlier teachers referring to their greatness.

The *Dehaḷīśa-stuti*, which is in twenty-eight verses, is another lyric which is valuable for understanding how the deity at Tirukkōvilūr was instrumental for the compositions of the hymns in Tamil for the first time. The deity pressed hard the self-controlled and eminent poets (the first three Āḻvārs) and made them sing in praise of Him in Tamil.[116] These poets were pure in mind and had the *yogic* vision obtained by *Vedic* study. They sighted Him with the lamp lit in the dead of night. The lamp had their devotion as the oil and their flawless qualities as the wick.[117] May the sayings, which are not inferior to any other, which were uttered by the foremost devotees and which correctly make clear the real nature of God, protect the universe from evil.[118] The *Bhagavad-dhyānasōpāna* is modelled on the *Amalaṉātipirāṉ* and is devoted to the description of Lord Raṅganātha from

114. *Yatirājasaptati*, 4.
115. Taitt. Up. 2.3 : 8.
116. *Dēhaḷīṣa-stuti*, 2, cf. ibid. 7, 16.
117. ibid. 6.
118. ibid. 27

foot to head. The descriptions of each limb of bewitching beauty are executed with great artistic skill. The last *śloka*[119] refers to the court of Lord Raṅganātha which is held in respect by men of refined taste (*rasika*). Evidently the Āḷvārs are referred to here all of whom were greatly attracted by the *arcā* form of Lord Raṅganātha. Emotion of love (devotion) made them sing His praise and so they are referred to here as rasikas.

In the *Devanāyakapañcāṣat*, which is devoted to singing the charming appearance[120] of Śrī Devanātha at Tiruvahīndra-puram, the author offers his respects to the line of preceptors starting from Nammāḷvār and Nāthamuni and ending with Rāmānuja.[121] The decad of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār on Śrī Deva-nātha must have inspired the author in the description of the deity and also in addressing the deity as '*naṭaṣatya*' which means true to the devotee, [122] in the *Acyutaśataka* which was written in *Prākṛta* in praise of the same deity and is a proof of the author's command over that language. That the Āḷvārs, who had divine vision, could not comprehend the greatness of Śrī Vardarāja is suggested[123] by the author in his *Varadarājapañcāsat* where the deity is described in the language of the *Upaniṣads* and the traditional sources of the system. Attracted by the chastening and enchanting form of this deity, the author declares emphatically his unwillingness to proceed to Vaikuṇṭha.[124] The incident of the Lord accompanying Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār and Kaṇikaṇṇaṉ who left Kāñci when they were expelled by the ruler there and re-turned to the same shrine on their return at the request of the ruler is stated in the *Vegāsētu-śtotra*.[125] The path of self-surrender, which the Āḷvārs dealt with in their compositions

---

119. *Bhagavad-dhyānasōpāna*. 12.
120. cf. *Dēvanāyakapañcāsat*, v. 17 to 44.
121. ibid. 2.
122. *Acyutaśataka* 7, 19, 20, 79; for *dāsasatya* vide ibid. 71. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.1.
123. *Varadarāja-pañcāsat*,, v. 2.
124. ibid. v. 49.
125. *Vegāsetustotra*, v. 6.

received an effective treatment in the *Saraṇāgati-dīpika* and illustrated in *Parmārtha-stuti* which glorify respectively the deities Śrī Dīpaprakāsa at Kāñci and Śrī Vijayarāghava[126] at Tirupputkuḷi in the outskirts of Kāñci.

Much originality is revealed in the *Dayā-śataka* which is devoted to extol the quality of compassion (*dayā*) that is inseparably associated with Śrī Śrīnivāsa of Tirumalai. This quality is indispensable for the Lord Who is ever intending to uplift the suffering humanity. It is raised to the high status of being the queen, helping and guiding the Lord before Whom all the beings, being the recipients of its Grace, become alike without any trace of their natural differences.[125] Rāmānuja, Yāmuna and others could do what is beneficial to the world only because of this quality.[128]

That all material prosperity, however great and attractive they could be, is unwanted for one who has realised the need for serving God alone, is revealed in the *Vairāgya-pañcaka* which bears the influence of the *Tirumālai.*[120] The *Catu-śloki* of Āḷavantār, *Śrīstava* of Kūrat-tāḷvāṉ and *Śrī Guṇaratnakōsa* of Parācara Paṭṭar bore an appreciable influence in the *Śrīstuti.* Deśika composed *Abhītistava* praying for security to all people and in particular to Śrī Raṅgam which was attacked in 1336 A D. by Malik Kaffur.[130] Here he refers to the temple at Śrī Raṅgam with its towers and guardians of the entrances[131] and the savage attacks of the Muslims.[132] The final prayer he made was that he must be allowed to live amidst people who wish for each other's well-being [133] In

126. This is the name by which the deity is known in this shrine. Vedānta Deśika refers to Him by epithets such as '*Raṇa-puṅgava*', '*Samarapuṅgava*,' etc.
127. *Dayā-śataka*, 65.
128. ibid. 59.
129. T.M. 2.
130. Introduction to *Saṅkalpa-sūvodaya*, p.70.
131. *Abhītistava*, 25.
132. ibid. 22.
133. ibid. 28.

this connection, it is worth nothing that his services during this period were unique and commendable. Through his efforts, the *utsava* idol of Śrī Raṅganātha which was then taken to Tirumalai for security, was brought back to Śrī Raṅgam and installed in 1347 A.D. as evidenced by two *ślokas* which were composed by him and inscribed in the temple wall at Srī-Raṅgam.[134] The other service, which he then rendered, was in preserving the *Śrutaprakāśikā* of Sudarśana-sūri and protecting the lives of the two sons of Sudarśana-sūri when the Muslim forces attackd Śrī Raṅgam. He gave them due propagation[135] among his disciples for the study of this commentary, which must have been lost to posterity but for his interest in its preservation and propagation.

It is only Deśika that sang the praise of Śrī Bhūdevi and Āṇṭāḷ in the *Bhūstuti* and the *Godāstuti* respectively. In the latter piece, a reference is made to the *Tiruppāvai* which is composed by Āṇṭāḷ.[136] The word '*godā*' which denotes the name of Āṇṭāḷ, also refers to the river Godāvari which fact is utilised to contrast and compare Āṇṭāḷ with the rivers Soṇā, Tuṅgabhadrā, Sarasvatī, Virajā, Godāvarī and Narmadā by employing pun.[136] The garland which Āṇṭaḷ wore at first and then offered to God is shown to be superior to any garland, including the celestial one and liked more by God.[138] If God is favourably disposed to the offending devotees, it is because God is restrained by her garland from having his own way of dealing with offenders and by her compositions which are sweet like melodious notes emanating from the strings of the Vīṇa[139]. Lord Raṅganātha is fancied to be reclining with his face turned to the South, because of His esteem for that

134. Introduction to *Saṅkalpasūryōdaya* pp. 71-72 cf. *Yatīndrapravaṇa-prabhāva*, p.26.

135. Vide. Vardañātha: *Vedāntadeśikamangalā śāsanam*, 8. cf. Introduction to *Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya*, p. 70.

136. *Godāstuti*, 4.

137. ibid. 6.

138. ibid. 14 to 16.

139. ibid. 5.

direction in which lies Śrī Villipputtūr the place of her birth.[140] Periyāḷvār, the father of Āṇṭāḷ composed hundreds of verses[141] in praise of God but did not get any reputation for that though God usually becomes pleased with a little praise. He got the reputation of having become great by offering the garland which was rendered fragrant having adorned her head, that is, Viṣṇu-citta, her father, came to be known as Periya (great) Āḷvār.[142]

Again, it appears that except for Kūranārāyaṇayati, who wrote the *Sudarśana-śataka*, Vedānta Desika alone wrote independent lyrics in praise of the ten divine incarnations in the *Dasāvatāra-stotra*, the divine missiles of Viṣṇu in the *Sodaśayudha stotra*, the discus of Viṣṇu in the *Sudārśanāṣṭakā* and Garuḍa the vehicle of Viṣṇu in the *Garuḍa-daṇḍaka* and *Garuḍapañcāsat*. It is held that the author made use of his knowledge in the *mantra* and *tantra sāstras* in composing the *Sudarśanāṣṭaka* and the *Garuḍa-pañcāsat*. In the latter work, Garuḍa's status is described. His bringing nectar and the exploits which he exhibited in bringing the serpents under control are expounded in detail. Each limb of Garuḍa is then graphically described and this is followed by a description of the astounding feats and achievments of Garuḍa. The *Garuḍa-daṇḍaka* has much importance for one who intends to meet the counter-attacks of the rivals Greatness of Garuḍa had a meaningful purpose in the life of Deśika who repeated the *Garuḍa-mantra* several times on the hill before the shrine of Śrī Devanātha at Tiruvahīndrapuram. Garuḍa appeared before him and initiated him in the *Hayagrīva-mantra*. It is through the Grace of Hayagrīva that Deśika, who was already proficient in all branches of study, acquired stupendous talent and outshone every other scholar in his time.

The doctorine of self-surrender receives treatment in his three works, namely, *Nyāsa-daśaka*, *Nyāsa-vimśati* and *Nyāsa-tilaka*. Appeal to the deity for shelter is stated in the

140. ibid. 11.
141. Periyāḷ Tm. contains 473 verses.
142. *Godā-Stuti*, 10.

first mentioned work. The second work gives the attainments and qualifications of the preceptor[143] and pupil,[144] treats the doctrine of *prapatti* from the point of acceptability, after refuting the objections that are raised against it and deals with the way of life which one, who had adopted the course, shall practise. The third work discusses the admissibility of this course and refers to the practice of this through his uncle who was the great grandson of Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ [145] His utter dislike of serving any one else for personal gains is aptly conveyed in this work.[146] These lyrical poems, which are remarkable for the grace and diction of the Sanskrit language, serve two purposes, namely, (i) the path of self-surrender is presented directly or suggested and its importance is explained and (ii) the greatness of *arcā* worship is stressed. Both these are mainly due to the inspired teachings of the Āḻvārs.

Among his five works which represent the poetic and dramatic forms, the *Pādukā-sahasra* consists of one thousand verses in praise of the sandals of Lord Raṅganātha. The most original and individual flights of poetic fancy are displayed in this which is one of the Indian poems unsurpassed in poetic excellence. The sandals are called *'Saṭhāri'* and Nammāḻvār is also known as Saṭhāri (Saṭhakōpa). The author pays his respects to Nammāḻvār whose name is that of the sandals and who had produced another *Saṁhitā* of the *Vedas.*[147] Saṭhakōpa composed the *Thousand Verses* in Tamil and he has entered into the sandals in order to bring Viṣṇu's Grace within the reach of those who could not make a study of the *Tiruvāymoḻi.*[148] Deśika's *Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya* is in criticism of Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabōdha-candrōdaya.* In this work the author combats the Advaitic conclusion of Kṛṣṇamiśra by preferring the solar light of divine Grace to the

143. *Nyāsa-viṁśati* 1.
144. ibid. 2.
145. *Nyāsa-tilaka*, 9.
146. ibid. 26 to 29.
147. *Pādukā-sahasra* 1: 3.
148. ibid. 2: 2.

moony effulgence of *ātma-jñāna.* It is an allegorical drama in ten Acts representing the conflict in the *jīva* between the forces of Vivēka and Mahāmoha heaped by Kāma, Krōdha, Darpa and Dambha. Vivēka subdues the evils of *rāga* and *dvēṣa* and is reinforced by Vairāgya and *tattva jñāna* led by Viṣṇu *bhakti.* The hero is Vivēka and Sumati is his queen and their plan is to free *Puruṣa* from the hazards of Karma and to enable him to attain *mukti.* This work is unrivalled in allegorical literature for dignity grandeur, and intellectual eminence and has more divinity in it than the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. His *Yādavābhyudaya* is a fine and elegant poem which won the admiration of the renowned Appaya Dīkṣitar in the sixteenth century and made him compose a valuable commentary on it.

Three out of the twenty-seven works which Deśika wrote for maintaining the Visiṣṭādvaita doctorines are now lost. Some of the available works are in the form of commentaries on the works of earlier writers. Five of them are devoted to establish the path of self-surrender as authentic and valid and to prove the validity of the *Pāñcarā ra* system and the practices governed by it. The *Dramidōpaniṣatsāra* and *Dramidōpaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvaḷi* contain in essence the messages enshrined in Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi.* His *Tattvātikā* is an extensive gloss in vigorous and masterly prose on the Rāmānuja's *ŚrīBhāṣya*; his *Adhikaraṇa sāravalī* is a series of beautiful Sanskrit verses of surpassing excellence summarizing the discussions on the various topics of the *Vedānta-sūtra; his Nyāya-siddhāñjana* is a text book of Visiṣṭādvaitic logic and it consists of six sections dealing with the problems of *jada, jīva, Īśvara, mukti, buddhi* and *adravya;* his commentaries on *Īsāvāsyōpaniṣad* and Rāmānuja's *Bhagavad gita bhāṣya* controvert the Advaitic theory of *ajñāna* and *akarma* and defend the view that Brahman is *saguna* and not *nirguna* and that *karma* is transfigured into *kaiṅkarya;* his *Seśvara-Mīmāṁsā* is a reconstruction of Jaimini's *Pūrva Mimāṁsā* by integrating two *Mīmāṁsās* and controverting the atheistic interpretation of the former; his *Tattvamuktā-kalāpa* is an elaborate and critical discussion of the nature of the universe in the light of the

Viśiṣtādvaitic philosophy, together with an explanatory gloss on it called *Sarvārtha-siddhi;* and his *Śatadūṣaṇi* is a polemical treatise directed against Advaita.

Deśika wrote thirty-four works in Tamil mixed up with Sanskrit for the easy understanding of the tenets of the school by those whose scholarship in Sanskrit *Sāstraic* system is not deep rooted. All these works contain a decisive treatment of the various doctrines of the school viewed from various angles. The conclusions are justified by citing the passages from the *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, works of earlier writers and from the *Nālāyiram*. Two among these are lost and one, which was known as *Steyāvirodha* justified the activities of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār for propagating Vaiṣṇavism and the other was *Maturakavihṛdayam*, a commentary on *Kaṇṇiṇuṇ-ciṟut'tāmpu*. The *Guruparamparā-sāra* deals with the line of spiritual teachers in the school of Rāmānuja. It is said here that those passages of the *Vedas* which are not understandable, rather the doctrines which are preached in the *Vedas* are easily understood through the compositions of the Āḷvārs[149]. No other spiritual teacher in the school of Rāmānuja has made a categorical statement of this kind. That a spiritual preceptor is needed for every one without whom progress in life is impossible is stated by drawing the instance of Maturakavi who worshipped only Nammāḷvār and no one else[150]. The *Rahasyatrayasāra* is the biggest among these works and deals with the three secret *mantras*. In the introductory section, the author pays his respects to those who recite the compositions of the Āḷvārs in the presence of Lord Varadarāja at Kāñci. They are described as the servants who clean the streets which belong to that Lord. They are described as capable of resolving the doubts that arise in regard to *Karma-kāṇḍa* and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas*.[151] The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* declare that songs which are composed in Tamil could be sung on occasions of festivals.[152]

149. RTS. p. 9.
150. ibid. p. 20.
151. ibid. Chap. 1, p. 72.
152. Is. S. 11: 256.

Those who sing them shall march before the deity thus purifying the streets for the Lord's procession. This is what the author means here by cleaning the streets. Those persons are proficient in *Vedas* and *Vedānta* to the extent of offering the correct solutions for the doubts arising there. Then the author discusses in greater detail the features and importance of *arthcapañaka*,[153] *Tattvatraya*[154], Viṣṇu's supreme position,[155] means of getting *mokṣa*,[156] and the three secret *mantras*.[157] His skill in offering an original treatment of the topics in this work is equalled only by his extraordinary talents used in citing the most appropriate authorities from Sanskrit works as well as the *Nālāyiram*. His ***Paramapadasōpāna*** also brings out of his idea of *mukti* more beautifully wherein he constructs a spiritual ladder from the worldliness to Vaikuṇṭha. The main milestones in this pathway to *mukti* are the metaphysical knowledge of Brahman arrived at by *vivēka*, the moral progress of the pilgrim through *vairāgya*, the religious striving by *bhakti* or *prapatti* and the mystic ascent to the home in the Absolute. In the *Satsampradāya-pariśuddhi*, one among these works, the author says that another language (that is Tamil, which is other than Sanskrit) shall be adopted to treat the *Vedāntic* doctrines, as it would be easy to make clear the *Vedāntic* doctrines through that language.[158] The author's eagerness in maintaining the tenets of the system against misinterpretation is revealed when he says that there is nothing contradictory to the tenets among the spiritual descendants of Rāmānuja. The difference, if at all is pointed out to be present, must only be interpreted as arising out of adopting different methods of construing the passages. Any difference in the practices due to time and place could not be taken to show that the doctrines have changed.[159] This is a reference to the differences of views

153. RTS. Chap. 2.
154 ibid. Chap. 3.
155. ibid. Chap 4
156. ibid Chap 6 to 10.
157. ibid. Chap. 24 to 26.
158. *Seventeen Rahasyas*, p.3.
159. ibid. p. 5.

in certain doctrinal interpretations which were arising in the days of the author. The other works are of varying size, some being very brief. The treatment that is given to the same matter varies from one work to another. God had the nectar brought out of the ocean that was churned, and helped the world. The Feet of God are more sweet than nectar and these are shown only by the spiritual teacher (Ācārya).[160] No one could be considered to be even equal to those who are devoted to God.[161] That creation and maintenance of the world of sentient and non-sentient beings are due to God's will and are not dependent on anybody else is dealt with in the work *Tattvasandeśa.*[162] The author recounts the action of benefaction which the world has received from the Lord.[163] The path of self-surrender is discussed in brief[164] and it is shown that the Lord has given assurance that those who surrender unto Him would not suffer.[165] In the *Virodha-parihāra,* one hundred and nine objections to the tenets of Vaiṣṇavite school are brought in and answered. Some of the conclusions arrived at are as follows: No one but Nārāyaṇa could be the supporter for all.[166] The sins committed before and those committed due to carelessness and also wilfully get destroyed by *prapatti.*[167] The self does not stand to lose anything by being in bondage, or subjected to the workings of *karma* or directions of the *sāstra*.[168] The Lord becomes subordinated to the devotees.[169] He does not take note of their offences.[170] A servant is one who carries out the order of the master. A devotee is a servant in the sense that he carries out the orders issued by the Lord, his master, through

160. ibid. p. 8.
161. ibid. p. 16.
162. ibid. pp. 32 to 35.
163. *Upakārasaṅgraha.*
164. *Añjalivaibhava.*
165. *Abhayapradāna-sāra*
166. Nan. Tv. 7, 57.
167. T.M. 40, r on. Tv. 94.
168. *Virodhaparihāra*, p. 280. cf. TVR. 1.
169. ibid. p. 252.
170. cf. *Varadarājastava* 20; Peri. Tm. 4.9: 2.

the *sāstras* with regard to Himself and His devotees. Not carrying out these orders constitutes an offence. Purification, sipping of water, worship of *saṁdhya* and others are included under *kaiṅkarya*. When these are not carried out, the individual becomes unfit for the specific services.[171] That an interpretation of this kind for the concept of *kaiṅkarya* is not applicable to the *kali* age is no argument, for that is *kaliyuga* when the Lord is not in the heart of a man and *kaliyuga* becomes *kṛtayuga* when He dwells in the heart of the devotee.[172] The concept of service derives its source from the concept of *seṣa* which declares the relationship of a self to God.[173] To become borne (*ādheya*) and to be ordained (*vidheya*) become meaningful only when the spirit of service is meant to be put to practice.[174] A self who becomes *śeṣa* to his Ācārya, continues to be the *śeṣa* for God.[175] It is not proper to argue that service is attended with the feeling pain,[176] being likened to the life of a dog,[177] for he, who treats his nature to be controlled by the Lord, would certainly like that dependence and consider that as enjoyable.[178] God is protector of all in two ways, namely, (i) the nature and existence of the selves are not allowed to be affected by anything, and (ii) the selves are protected by the removal of the undesirables for which God expects a sort of request from the devotees.[179] Deśika's *Pradhānāśataka* deals with the important aspects of Vaiṣṇavism under one hundred heads. Some of them could be stated as follows: Service is to characterize the life of a Vaiṣṇavite.[180] One has to avoid doing offences.[181] *Kaiṅkarya* to the devotees is

171. *Virodhaparihāra*, p. 274.
172. ibid. pp. 274, 275 cf. *Viṣṇudharmōttara* 109: 57. and TVM 5.2: 11.
173. ibid. p. 280.
174. ibid. p. 281. cf. *Catusśloki* 2.
175. ibid. 284 cf. TVM 3.7: 7.
176. *Manuśmṛti* 4: 160.
177. ibid. 4: 6.
178. *Virodhaparihāra*, pp. 280–281.
179. ibid. pp. 250, 251.
180 *Pradhānaśataka*. No. 74 cf. TVM 1.2: 8.
181. ibid. No. 53, cf. *Viṣṇudharmōttara* 76: 22.

more important than the one for God.[182] Even here, the service to the Ācārya is more important.[183] While rendering service to God, the order of doing it must be for *Para* at first, *Vyūha* next and so on.[184] No discrimination shall be made among the divine descents (*avatāras*) on this account [185] Procurement of the materials like *tuḷaci* for purposes of worship shall be made without infringing the directions of the *śāstra* [186] The holy place shall be preferred to an ordinary one for doing *kaiṅkarya*.[187] Priority shall be given here to the places which have manifested themselves (*svayam-vyakta*), then those established by gods (*saiddha*), then those which are installed by sages (*ārṣa*) and lastly the ones which are established by men (*māuṣa*).[188] If it is difficult to observe this order, one shall render service in the place where he dwells.[189] Ardent devotion is required for rendering service.[190] One should necessarily get into the company of the *sāttvikas* [191] A pupil shall at no time bear malice towards the preceptor.[192] If one offends at a devotee, he shall expatiate that offence by seeking the help of another devotee.[193]

Dēśika achieved distinction by composing eighteen poems in Tamil, all of them being intended to bring forth the Viśiṣṭādvaitic doctrines. Five of them are now lost. Significance of the three secret *mantras*,[194] *arthapañcaka*,[195]

182 ibid. No. 58.
183. ibid. No 64.
184. ibid. No. 70.
185 ibid. No. 71.
186. ibid. No. 75.
187. ibid. No. 76.
188. ibid. No. 77.
189. ibid. No. 78. cf. Periyāḻ. Tm 4.4: 7 and TVM. 5.3: 11.
190. ibid. No. 68. cf. Nāc. Tm. 11: 10.
191. ibid. No. 82.
192. ibid. No. 84.
193. ibid. No. 86.
194. *Tirumantrac-curukkū, Dvayac-curukku* and *Caramaślokac-curukku.*
195. T.P. 248 to 258.

act of self-surrender,[196] and the routine life of the devotee[197] are dealt with in some of these. The twelve names of the Lord are explained in detail.[198] The author dwells at length on the rapturous sound of the trumpet blown at Kāñci during festival of Sri Varadarāja.[199] The matter which is taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is treated in twenty-one Tamil verses, eighteen among them being devoted to the treatment of each one of the chapters.[200] Śrī Devanātha the deity at Tiruvahīndrapuram is described as an enchanting person, the sight of which will remove bondage.[201] *Mummaṇikkōvai*, which shall consist of thirty verses is available only in ten verses.[202] The author's treatment of himself as a woman in love with Śrī Devanātha bears the influence of the Āḻvārs' treatment of Nāyaka-Nāyaki *bhāva*. In fine Tamil the author enumerates the restrictions which are required to be observed in the matter of one's taking of food.[203] The *Pirapantacāram*[204] consisting of eighteen verses is a prayer to the Āḻvārs to bless him with the purport of their poems. It tells us the number of verses in each of the works of the Āḻvārs and arrives the number 4000 in the *Nālāyiram*. Even though Nāthamuni codified it, he did not restate the exact number of verses in each *Prabandham*; at the time of Rāmānuja a poem of 108 verses had been added to the collection as the twenty-fourth *Prabandham*. It may perhaps be the view of Desika to restrict that no more addition was to be made to the holy collection and so he arrived at the number 4000 in his own way taking also into account Amutaṉār's poem on Rāmānuja and also to stop the tendency of interpolations by the later Tamil poets.

---

196. ibid. 237 to 247.
197. ibid. 259 to 268.
198. ibid. 280 to 292.
199 ibid. 269 to 279.
200. ibid. 326 to 346.
201. ibid. 357 to 366.
202. ibid. 347 to 356. Vide *Paṉṉirupāṭṭiyal*-Sūt 156,
203. ibid. 385 to 405.
204. ibid. 367 to 384.

The dizzy eminence Deśika reached in the domain of of philosophy and dialectics is only matched by the brilliance of his intellectual energy exhibited in every one of his works. It is no exaggeration to say that the moral and intellectual forces that radiated from the long line of great Ācāryas were all the more genuinely and actively combined in him than in any other religious teacher known to history. The powerful influence that he exerted as much during his life as after, is, in no small measure, due to the fascination of his great and attractive personality which was an embodiment of uprightness and nobility, simplicity and wisdom. No framework in which we may try in words to enclose this towering personality, can do justice to the varied power of his intellect, the wide range of his knowledge, or the burning faith of his simple life. No wonder that eminent scholars even of divergent philosophic and religious thought joined in paying their unstinted homage to his greatness as a thinker, writer and controversialist.

NAIṈĀRĀCĀR: After the death of Deśika the mantle of the Ācārya fell on the shoulders of his son, Varadācārya otherwise known as Naiṉārācār; but after him there was no pontiff to hold the flock together. One of his disciples, Brahmatantra-svatantra, who was also a leader, withdrew to Tirupati and lost touch with the generality of people.

NAÑCĪYAR: The other line of Divya Prabandha tradition branching off from Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ, was first represented by Nañcīyar, the disciple of Parācara Paṭṭar from whom he studied the *Six Thousand.*[205] Nañcīyar had the reputation of being known as Vedāntin living in the west to Śrī Raṅgam, perhaps in the Karnataka State. At the direction of Rāmānuja,[206] Parācara Paṭṭar went to his place, and won him in a debate, converted him to become a Vaiṣṇa vite and gave him the name Nañcīyar (nam–our, cīyar–saint). He wrote with the permission of Paṭṭar a commentary known as *Nine Thousand* on the *Six Thousand* of Piḷḷāṉ[207] Kiṭāmpi

205. G.P. p. 214.
206. ibid p. 189.
207. ibid. p. 214.

Āccāṉ told Nañcīyar that he was taught by Rāmānuja that wherever the Lord is mentioned, Lakṣmī must be taken to have been included in that reference.[208] Nañcīyar wrote the *Nitya*,[209] a manual for daily practice of a Vaiṣṇavite, but this work is lost. He had a disciple called Nampūr Varadarāja whom he affectionately called Nampiḷḷai ('our son'). He was also called Kalivairidāsa. He had four disciples, namely, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai, Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai, Piṉpaḷakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar, and Īyuṇṇi Mātavapperumāḷ. Nampiḷḷai's contribution lies much in what he imparted to these disciples.

PERIYAVĀCCĀṈ PIḶḶAI (1168-1263 A.D.): He commented on *Tiruvāymoḷi* in his work called *Twenty-four Thousand*. He is the only writer who commented on all the four thousand verses of all the Āḷvārs, of which the portion on the *Periyāḷvār-tirumoḷi* is not available except for the first piece *Tiruppallāṇṭu*. He has also the credit for compiling the *Taṉiśloki* which is a collection of the important *ślokas* in *Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇam*. He commented on them in Tamil mixed up with Sanskrit and cited the relevant passages from the compositions of the Āḷvārs for better elucidation of those *ślokas*. His other works are *Paranta-rahasya-nivāraṇam*, *Māṇikka-mālai*, *Nava-ratna-mālai*, *Sakalapramāṇa-tātpariyam*, *Upakāra-rattinam*, commentaries on the *Gadyatraya* and *Śtotra-ratna*, *Carama-rahasyam* and *Nikamanap-paṭi*.

VAṬAKKUT-TIRUVĪTIP-PIḶḶAI (1167-1263 A.D.): He was otherwise known as Kṛṣṇapāda. He prepared a commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* embodying what was taught by Nampiḷḷai during his discourses on Nañcīyar's *Nine Thousand*. Nampiḷḷai read through this and found that not even a letter of what was taught by him was left out. He was much fascinated by this composition. However, he desired that Īyuṇṇi Mātavapperumāḷ, one of his disciples, who had the name of Nañcīyar,[210] must gain importance as a scholar and so gave the

---

208. R.T.S. p. 750.

209. ibid. p. 1182.

210. Nañcīyar's name was Mādhava.

composition of Vaṭakkut-tiruvitip-piḷḷai to Mātavapperumāḷ. This composition was known as *Thirty-six Thousand* and came to be called *Nampiḷḷai Īṭu,* because it contained the record of what Nampiḷḷai had taught. Īyuṇṇi Mātavapperumāḷ was responsible for the propagation of *Īṭu.*

VĀTIKĒSARI AḶAKIYA MAṆAVĀḶAP-PERUMĀḶ JĪYAR : He wrote a commentary called *Twelve Thousand* on the *Tiruvāy-moḻi.* From the number 12000, it must not be presumed that this work was anterior to that of his preceptor Periya-vāccāṉ Piḷḷai. In fact, the attempt of this writer was to present a simple commentary as compared to *Twenty-four Thousand* and *Thirty-six Thousand.*

NAIṆĀRĀCCĀṈ PIḶḶAI : He was the son of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and the author of *Caramarahasya-traya* which dealt with the three secret *mantras.* He expressed and maintained the view that Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu, is an individual self and renders aid (*puruṣakāra*) to the suffering humanity for obtaining the Grace of God. Meghanādāri was perhaps a contemporary of this scholar. He maintained the same view about Lakṣmī.[211] Curiously enough, ŚrīRāmamiśra, who was also known as Cōmāciyāṇṭāṉ, and was a disciple of Rāmānuja and an ancestor of Meghanādāri, maintained that both Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu together form the *śeṣin*[212] In all likelihood, this writer could have been influenced by contemporary views.

PIḶḶAI LŌKĀCCĀRYAR : The famous Piḷḷai Lōkācāryar the eldest son and successor of Vaṭakku-t-tiruvītip-piḷḷai, the elder contemporary of Vedānta Deśika is generally regarded as the founder and formulator of *Tenkalaism* as a distinct sect. He is called the younger Piḷḷai to distinguish him from Nampiḷḷai who was given the name of Lōkācāryar by one Kantāṭai Tōḷappar, the gransdon of Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ,[213]

---

211. *Nayadyumaṇi,* pp 255–256.

212. *Nyāya-siddhāñjana.* pp. 233–234.

213. U.R.M. 51. He was renowned expositor of *Divya Prabandham* basing his exposition on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas.*

and who lived earlier. When the Muhammadans sacked Śrī Raṅgam, slaughtered the Vaiṣṇnavites and committed sacrilege in the temple, he took a leading role in removing the idol of the temple to a place of safety. An intellectually brilliant man, he composed eighteen *Rahasyas* or sacred manuals of *Tenkalaism*, generally known as *Aṣṭādaṣa Rahasyas*, to uphold the teaching of his school. These works are mostly of *Maṇipravāḷa* or Sanskritised Tamil. Most of these works are small in size; but they came to be regarded by the Tenkalai sect as the only correct interpretation of the cults of Rāmānuja and the Āḷvārs. Among his works, the *Artta-pañcakam* brings out the essentials of Viśiṣṭādvaita in their fivefold aspect of (i) the nature of Īśvara, (ii) the nature of the *jiva*, (iii) the *puruṣartha*, (iv) the *ūpāya* and (v) the *virōdhi.* Each aspect is analysed into five forms with its own special features. Īśvara or God exists as *para*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmin* and *arcā* of whom the last mentioned form as the permanent incarnation of the Grace of God is most accessible to the *mumukṣu* The *jīva* or soul is classified into five kinds, viz., the *nitya* or ever free, the *mukta* or the freed, the *baddha* or *saṁsārin*, the *kevaḷa* enjoying *kaivalya* in a state of stranded spiritual solitude, and the *mumukṣu.* The five chief ends of conduct are *dharma* or the performance of the *Vedic* duties, *artha* or the acquisition of the economic goods of life, *kāma* or the enjoyment of the pleasures of life here and in *Svarga*, *ātmānubhava* or *kaivalya* and *Bhagavadanubhava* or God-experience. The five means of attaining Brahman are *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhakti* or solvation by self effort, *prapatti* or submission to the redemptive will of God and *ācāryabhimāna* or absolute loyalty to the *guru* as a living mediator between the *mumukṣu* and the Lord. The obstacles are also fivefold, and they are traced to faith in other gods, other means and ends than those prescribed for the *mumukṣu*, the mistaken faith as the *svarūpa jñāna* as an end in itself, godlessness and the confusions relating to *prapatti.* This kind of classification runs counter to the traditionally accepted matters and seems to have been intended to lay stress on some of them as essential for the spiritual progress. *Tattvatraya* is written in a terse aphoristic *maṇipravāḷa* style on the model of *Brahma-sūtras.* It consists

of three parts, defining the nature of *Cit*, *Acit* and *Īśvara* The first part, *Cit-prakaraṇam*, defines *ātman* and its *jñāna* and explains the classification of *ātman*. The second part, *Acit-prakaraṇam*, describes Acit in its three aspects of *kāla*, *śuddha-tattva* and *miśra tattva* or *prakṛti* evolving into twenty-four categories including the psycho-physical factors of *buddhi*, *manas* and *indriyas* and the cosmological elements of the five *bhūtas* and *tan-mātras*. It is also known as *avidyā* or *māya*. The third part *Īśvara-prakaraṇam*, is devoted to the understanding of Īśvara including his *svarūpa*, *rūpa* and *guṇa*. His *Sārasaṅgraha* is valuable for exposition of the significance of the *Dvaya-mantra*. This *mantra* conveys ten senses: (i) The Lord is the husband of Lakṣmī; (ii) He is Nārāyaṇa; (ii) His pair of Feet are adorable; (iv) the Feet are the means for *mokṣa*; (v) the self must have faith to request for God's Grace; (vi) Service at the Feet of Lakṣmī is closely associated with this; (vii) the Lord is the enjoyer; (viii) He is the *svāmin* for all; (ix) Service to Him shall be for all times; and (x) the proofs for maintaining eternality of service. All these ten meanings are explained and it is shown that they are suggested by the ten centums of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. In his work *Navavidha-sambandha*, he enumerates that the Lord and the self are related by nine kinds of relation: *veṣaṣana-viṣesya*, *rakṣya-rakṣaṇa*, *śeṣā-śeṣin*, *bhartṛ-bhārya*, *jñātṛ-jñeya*, *svasvāmin*, *śarira-ṣaririn*, *dhārya-dhāraka* and *bhoktṛ-bhogya*. The *Mumukṣup-paṭi* brings out the greatness of *Tirumantra*[214]. The uppermost limit for the Lord's accessibility lies in the *arcā* form of worship.[215] Service (*kaiṅkarya*) is said to include *karma*.[216] *Śrī Vacaṇa Pūṣaṇam* is also aphoristic and terse. This work consists of four chapters; it is more popular on account of its main religious motive and value. The first chapter brings out the status of Śrī or Lakṣmī in the salvation scheme as the divine mediatrix or *puruṣakāra* between the sentient being (*cetana*) and the Lord. Her unique qualities of *ananyārhatva* (of being His alone), *pāratantrya* or dependence on Him, and *kṛpā* as exemplified

---

214. *Mumukṣup-paṭi*, 18 to 21.
215. ibid. 139.
216. ibid. 270.

in Sitā's life. She joyfully submits herself to Īśvara, as she has her being in Him and belongs to Him, and always intercedes on behalf of the sinner by pleading for his being forgiven. She subdues the retributive will of Īśvara by the beauty of her enticing love and at the same time she melts the hearts of the sinner by her infinite tenderness. It is the sinner mentality of the sinner that occasions the intervention of the Divine Grace, and this grace is spontaneous and not conditioned by the effort of the self as in the case of the *bhakta*. Of the fivefold forms of God it is the *arcā* only that is ever available to the *cetana* who thirsts for God. The Lord is Himself the means of salvation and the goal of endeavour. The true meaning of self-surrender is not winning the Grace of God by self-effort, but responding passively to its free flow. The second chapter dwells on the superiority of *paragata svikāra*, in which the Lord seeks the sinner, over the *svagata svikāra*, in which the devotee or *bhakta* seeks the Lord. Grace is the free gift of God. It flows spontaneously like the mother's milk (*mulaip-pāl*); if it is to be gained by effort, it resembles the artificial milk for the same baby, purchased in the milk depot or a chemist's shop (*vilaip-pāl*). When man seeks God, even *prapatti* is futile; but if the Lord elects him, even his sinfulness is ignored, if not relished. *Prapatti* has its fruition in service to God or to His devotees in a spirit of utter humility without the slightest trace of egoism. A devotee is known by his spiritual worth and not by his birth. The conceit of high birth is an impediment to devotion; it becomes a heresy when a devotee of low birth is not duly respected. The third chapter assigns the highest value to *maṅgalā-śāsanam* or benediction offered by the devotee, in his intense solicitude of love, to the Lord for His eternal reign of Grace and to deep devotion as in the case of Viṣṇu-citta who was so much drawn by the beauty of the child Kṛṣṇa that, in his God intoxicated state, he forgot His Īśvaratva and with deep concern for the safety of the Divine child tended him with the affection of a fond parent. The fourth chapter prefers *ācāryabhimāna* to the Grace of God. The main reason for its preference is that, while the Lord is both just and

merciful, the Ācārya is moved only by mercy.[217] The work then concludes with the statement that service to the Ācārya and to the *bhāgavatas* irrespective of their station in life is the highest and the only means of attaining God. The author stresses that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is of great importance on account of Lakṣmī who was in prison as Sītā and according to the scholar the *Mahābhārata's* greatness lies in Kṛṣṇa's having undertaken work of a messenger.[218] The Āḷvārs practised *prapatti* only in the *arcā* form of God.[219] The *para* form of God is like the water surrounding us, *vyūha* like the milky ocean, *vibhava* like the rivers that flow, *arcā* like the water in the ponds and *antaryāmin* like the water inside the earth.[220] Those who are not learned like us, those who are great in their knowledge like the earlier Ācāryas and those who are extremely devoted to the Lord like the Āḷvārs are qualified to adopt the path of self-surrender.[221] The path of self-surrender is expounded with illustrations.[222] The *arcā* form of God shall not be spoken of in terms of the material out of which it is made. It is still worse to talk of the ancestry of the devotees of God[223] The conduct of a pupil towards his preceptor and the attitude which is expected to be shown by a preceptor towards his pupil are dealt with in the section called *Sadācārya anuvartanam*.[224] The concept of service is dealt with as having three stages. The first stage is marked by rendering service to the Ācārya, the second by that to the Lord and the third to the devotees of God.[225]

AḺAKIYA MANAVĀḺAP-PERUMĀḺ NĀYAṈĀR : He was the younger brother of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryar. He commented on

---

217. The worship of Ācārya became in later days a main feature of some of the sects of Vaiṣṇavism in North India also.
218. SVP. 1 : 5.
219. ibid. 1 : 35.
220. ibid. 1 : 39.
221. ibid. 1 : 43.
222. ibid. 1 : 80.
223. ibid. 2 : 195.
224. ibid. 3.
225. ibid. 4 : 412.

the compositions of Tiruppāṇāḻvār and Maturakaviyaḻvār and Āṇṭāḷ's *Tiruppāvai*. The *Ācārya Hṛdayam* is the best known work of this scholar and is held to be a supplement of *Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam*. In it Nammāḻvār's greatness is clearly expounded and the contrast is drawn between his work and *Gītā*.[226] The ten centums of Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāymoḻi* are taken to present the ten divine descents (*avatāras*) of the Lord.[227] Rāmānuja is said to have written the *Śrī Bhāṣya* with the help of *Tiruvāymoḻi*.[228] The Lord is described to have taken divine descent as Varāha, Kṛṣṇa and Nammāḻvār was born as the son of Kāri mainly to uplift those who belonged to the low castes.[229]

TIRUVĀYMOḶIP-PIḶḶAI: Piḷḷai Lōkācāryar's position as the leader of the *Tenkalai* sect was taken by Śrī Saila otherwise known popularly as Tiruvāymoḻip-piḷḷai.[230] He made Āḻvār-tirunakari (Tirunelveli District), the birth place of Saṭha-kōpa, the scene of his preaching activities and carried on the traditions of this school throughout the period when worship at Śrī Raṅgam was disorganized. His great and main task was to train the celebrated Varavara Muni or Maṇavāḷa-māmunikaḷ, the acknowledged prophet of *Tenkalaism*.

MAṆAVĀḶA-MĀMUNIKAḶ (1371-1443 A.D): This well-known leader of *Tenkalai* school was born near Āḻvār Tirunakari in Tirunelveli District. He is believed by his followers to have been re-incarnation of Rāmānuja. He soon acquired proficiency in the tenets of Viśiṣṭādvaita and was initiated into the essentials of *Tiruvāymoḻi* by Tiruvāymoḻip-piḷḷai. On the death of his teacher the leadership of *Tenkalai* school devolved on this scholar. At that time *Tenkalai* school was definitely consolidated and established by him. After a few years' stay at Āḻvār Tirunakari he moved to Śrī Raṅgam and

226. A.H. Sūt. 190 to 193.
227. ibid. Sūt. 214.
228. ibid. Sūt. 65.
229. ibid. Sūt. 84.
230. He was also known as Tirumalaiyāḻvār.

made the place his headquarters. He spent his time there in consecrated service to the Lord and the co-ordination of worship in the Vaiṣnavite shrines by organizing the work of his disciples in different centres of tradition. He entered the *sannyāsa* order and spent his days in devotion to Lord Raṅganātha and exposition of the *Nālāyiram*. He laid down the principle that *Thirty-six Thousand* was the *Īṭu* or equal of *Śruta-prakāśika*. He introduced the *Īṭu* formally as a subject of holy studies. To popularise the teachings of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār, he wrote commentaries in a lucid style on *Tattva-traya*, *Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam*, *Mumukṣup-paṭi* and *Ācārya Hṛdayam*. He also wrote commentaries on *Periyāḷvār-tirumoḷi*, *Rāmānuca-ñūṟṟantāti*, and on two Tamil works viz., *Jñāna-cāram* and *Prēmēya-cāram* of Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ Emperumaṉār otherwise known as Devarāja. He also composed a Tamil work in *veṇpā* metre called *Upatēcā Ratnamālai* which contains the main teachings of the Āḷvārs. The six works of Tiru-maṅkaiyāḷvār are said to be the six ancillaries (*Vedāṅga*) for Nammāḷvār's compositions which are *Tamil Vedas*.[231] The *Tiruppallāṇṭu* of Periyāḷvār serves like the *praṇava* for the *Vedas* and are recited both before and after the recitation of the Tamil hymns.[232] The importance of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār's *Śrī Vacana Pūṣāṇam* is stressed by him,[233] as due to the relationship of the perceptor and pupil.[234] His other Tamil works are *Tituvāymoḷi-nūṟṟantāṭi* which is a summary of the hymns of *Tiruvāymoḷi*, *Ārttip-pirapantam*, a small treatise on methods of daily worship at home called *Tiruvārātana-kramam* and two little pieces in praise of Rāmānuja. In his *Yatirāja-viṁśati* he mentions Rāmānuja as devoted to Nammāḷvār who was ever serving the Feet of the Lord.[235] On account of his deeep devotion to Rāmānuja he was known as Yatīndra-pravaṇa.

TWO OTHER SCHOLARS: Nammāḷvār's greatness is sung in the *Śrī Parāṅkuśapañcaviṁśati* by Vādhula Varadanārāyaṇa

231. URM. 9.
232. ibid. 19.
233. ibid. 53 to 59.
234. ibid. 60 to 72.
235. *Yatirājaviṁśati*, 1.

of unknown date. Nammāḷvār is the prominent person among the other Āḷvārs.[236] That the path of self-surrender is the only means for *mokṣa* was taugt by this Āḷvār.[237] One Abhirāmavaraguru composed the *Nakṣatramālikā* in twenty-seven *ślokas*, enumerating the name of each of the twenty-seven constellations in their order and representing the greatness of Nammāḷvār.

OTHER WORKS ABOUT ĀḶVĀRS AND ĀCĀRYAS: An attempt was made by Śrīnivāsa who had the title Garuḍavāhanapaṇḍita to depict the lives of the Āḷvārs and Acāryas in the form of an Epic called *Divyasūricarita* in eighteen cantos. The verses from this work are quoted with the mention of this work by Piṉpaḷakiyaperumāḷ Jīyar in his *Guruparamparāpirapāva* while mentioning the dates of birth of the Āḷvārs.[238] The author of this work was a pupil of Nampiḷḷai (1147-1252 A.D.) and so it is to be assumed that Garuḍavāhanapaṇḍita should have lived before this date when his work must have become reputed. He is held to have been a contemporary of Rāmānuja. His work stops with the life account of Rāmānuja and this suggests that he could have been a younger contemporary of Rāmānuja. One departure from the traditional account of the life of the Āḷvārs that is found here lies in the author's description of Āṇṭāḷ's *svayamvara*[239] at Āḷvār-tirunakari. The arrival of the Lords from various holy places is graphically described and they are described vividly revealing an intended and clever imitation of Kālidāsa's treatment of Indumati's *svayamvara* and the entry of the prince and princess into the city of the Vidarbha king.[240] Piṉpaḷakiyaperumāḷ Jīyar's *Guruparamparāpirapāva* begins with the life account of Poykaiyāḷvār and stops with the life account of Nampiḷḷai who was his preceptor. This biography is valuable for the information it provides about

---

236. *Śrī Parāṅkuśapañcaviṁśati*, 2.
237. ibid. 6, 7.
238. G.P. pp. 7 to 9.
239. D.S.C. canto 12 and 13.
240. *Raghuvaṃsa* – canto 7.

the life-accounts of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas and for the citations from earlier sources. There is a work with the title *Yatīndra-pravaṇaprabhāva* by Piḷḷailōka Jīyar whose aim in writing this work was to describe the glory of Maṇavāḷa-māmuṉikaḷ who was also known as Yatīndrapravaṇa. The author traces the tradition of the *Guruparamparā* to Nam-piḷḷai and deals with the greatness of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār and Maṇavāla-māmuṉikaḷ. Neither he or Piṉpaḷakiyaperumāḷ Jīyar took note of the contribution of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai. The third Brahmatantra-svatantra-svāmin of Parakāla Mutt, Mysore, wrote the *Guruparamparā* according to the *Vaṭakalai* school. This work begins with the life-account of Poykai-yāḻvār and ends with that of Varadanātha son of Vedānta Deśika, greater importance being attached to the life-accounts of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika. Similarly, *Satsampradāya-muktāvaḷi* was written by Śrī Saṭhakōpa-yatīndra the thirty-third Head of the Ahobila Mutt (1851–1877 A.D.) with greater emphasis laid on the life and achievements of Ādivaṉ Saṭhakōpa-mahādeśika (1379–1460 A.D.). The *Prapan-nāmṛtam* and *Aricamaya-dīpam* represent the attempts to recount the tradition of Vaiṣṇavism according to the sources available to their authors. The scholars who came after Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavāḷa-māmuṉikaḷ contributed to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism by writing more and more commentaries on and criticism of the earlier works on the *Nālāyiram*. It could be said that much of what was written during this period was in the form of criticism on the doctrines of Viśiṣṭā-dvaita school.

(ii) *The two schools of Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Rāmānuja period:*

Thus there have come into existence two schools of *Nālāyiram* tradition, the one being known as *Vaṭakalai* owing its allegiance to Vedānta Deśika and the other *Teṉkalai* relating to Maṇavāla-māmuṉikaḷ. These names, *Vaṭakalai* and *Tenkalai* are of very late origin and perhaps belong to a period subsequent to Maṇavāla-māmuṉikaḷ. The differences which could have been instrumental for the naming of the two schools have been deep-rooted from early times, perhaps during the period which followed the passing away of Rāmānuja.

The *Śrī Bhāṣya* and *Bhagavad-gītā* do not suggest any clue that could have given rise to any difference in the interpretation of the central doctrines which they deal with nor does the *Nālāyiram* contain any. Rāmānuja was taught some secret doctrines by Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi.[241] These were known as *rahasyas* and must have included the three, namely, *Tirumantra*, *Dvaya* and *Carama-śloka*, the last which is taken from the *Gītā*.[242] Unlike as in the case of *Brahma-sūtras*, *Bhāgavad-gītā* and *Tiruvāymoḷi*, there was no authentic work treating these *rahasyas*. Having been orally transmitted, there must have been ample scope for a preceptor to give an exposition of them in a manner which he felt was not merely the correct one but also authentic. There must have been slight variations in the expositions offered by more than one preceptor for the same *rahasyas*. The methods which were adopted by the preceptors in the practice of their conduct must have been different according to individual capacities and these must have had a bearing in the interpretations of the *rahasyas*. The disciple also should have taken only such interpretations as authentic and supported them by citing those practices. In fact, there were some practices in the days of Rāmānuja which called forth criticism from certain quarters.[243] These were individual cases and also represented exceptions to the general customs. The masters and pupils in the same and succeeding generations cited such practices and chose to treat them as the correct ones, forgetting their departures from the established rules. This, however, was not always the case. The attitudes of others were different towards such practices resulting in the evolution of not two theories, one for and the other against them, but more than two, their number depending on the number of approaches made by them. This resulted in another change of attitude towards tradition. Every interpretation was required to be substantiated by relevent citations from works of accepted authenticity.

---

241. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 58.
242. Bh. G. 18: 66.
243. G.P. pp. 121, 122, 149.

In their attempt to justify their interpretations, the preceptors and scholars forced their views on the sources and expounded them in a manner that could accommodate their view points. Thus started the differences in the interpretations of *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the *rahasyas*. A beginning in this direction appears to have been made in the interpretation of of the passages in *Tiruvāymoḷi* by Tirumāḷaiyāṇṭāṉ and Rāmānuja.[244] Even after the commentary was written by Piḷḷāṉ on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, Parācara Paṭṭar is mentioned, as evidenced in the *Īṭu*, to have expressed disagreement to the views of Piḷḷāṉ and offered his own.[245] The tone of references to such differences both in the period of Rāmānuja and Parācara Paṭṭar is only suggestive of these two savants' eagerness to offer a better interpretation and not intended to cross the earlier ones. Much discredit was brought by later scholars for the earliest exponents by reading in between the lines and by asserting the authenticity of their own expositions. The unitary nature of the concepts of *rahasyas* was thus lost sight of. This resulted in the formulation of certain concepts most of them being based on the side of religion. Such concepts were acceptable to only one of the traditional schools and drew justifications from the *Nālāyiram* and the passages from the works of earlier writers. There was not much for the two schools of Vaiṣṇavism to quarrel about regarding the matters in the *Śrī Bhāṣya* and *Bhagavad-gitā-bhāṣya* which were not therefore cited. The *Rchasyas* and the compositions of the Āḻvārs afforded ample scope for the exhibition of divergences of opinion. While one school interpreted the *Rahnsyas* and the *Tiruvāymoḷi* without even suggesting a deviated sense for them by remaining faithful to the sacred sources like *Dharmaśāstras* and *Āgamas*, the other school swore by the deviation and supported it by the practice of the teacher who was held in the highest respect. It was not the language that effected this schism. While equal importance was given in one school for the Sanskrit sources and Tamil sources, the other school stood more by

244. Vide *Īṭu* on TVM 1.2: 1; 2.3: 3; 5.10: 4.

245. Vide *Īṭu* on TVM 6.5; 2.4: 1.

the Tamil sources ignoring the Sanskrit sources when they ran counter to the former and thus attached less significance to Sanskrit sources. For a long period till recently, the followers of the *Tenkalai* system were deeply studied in the Sanskrit sources like *Sri Bhāṣya* and *Gītā-bhāṣya* for matters of philosophical importance and followed the views of their school in matters pertaining to the *rahasyas* and *Prabandham*. The two sources were thus kept apart thus maintaining in practice the concept of *Ubhaya-vedānta*. The Ācarya was the only guide in these matters for the *Tenkalai* school, while he was also the guide for the *Vaṭakalai* school.

The differences which keep these schools apart from each other seem to have taken their rise in the later half of the thirteenth century and are mentioned by Naiṉāraccāṉ Piḷḷai, Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār and Vedānta Deśika in their works. This does not, however, suggest that the two schools were treated then as rivals as they are held today. Vedānta Deśika, who was aware of such differences, remarks that there was no difference regarding the doctrines among the followers of Rāmānuja and there existed only a difference in the interpretation of the same doctrine.[246] The differences must have become marked resulting in the rise of the two distinct schools in the Fifteenth century A.D. The *Vaṭakalai* school traces the orign of their doctrines to Praṇatārtihara (Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ) who was in charge of serving food for Rāmānuja.[247] The *Tenkalai* school does it to Empār, the cousin and disciple of Rāmānuja. Neither of these scholars, however, left any written record of their theories.

The main points on which these two sects differed are said to be eighteen.[248] It is worthwhile to consider what these points are:

---

246. *Satsampradāya-pariśuddhi*, p. 5.

247. cf. RTS. p. 1377.

248. An anonymous Sanskrit verse gives out these eighteen differences:
bhēdās svāmikṛpāphlānyagatiṣu śrīvyāptyupāyatvayoḥ
tadvātsalyadayāniruktivacasām nyāse ca tatkartari
dharmatyāgavirodhayos svavihite nyāṅgahetutvayoḥ
prāyaścittavidhau tadi–bhanjane 'nuvyāpti kaivalyayoḥ!
quoted by Sri V. Krishnamacharya in his beautiful Sanskrit introduction (p. 48) to *Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya*.

1. GOD'S GRACE: The *Tenkalai* school insists that the operation of God's Grace is unconditioned by human endeavour and is absolute. They say that the well-known text "He is to be obtained only by the one whom, He chooses"[249] is confirmed by the *Carama-śloka* of the *Gītā*,[250] and the mystic experience of Nammāḻvār. According to *Vaṭakalais*, God's Grace though it is uncaused becomes operative only through *bhakti* or *prapatti*, just as the divine tree is considered to yield the results desired by the seekers of them only at their request. Those who are in need of God's Grace have to make a request of God for it.[251] They argue that if Grace is free and unconditioned, *vāiṣamya* or arbitrariness and *nairghṛṇya* or cruelty would be attributable to the divine nature.[252] In that case, all people would in time be emancipated, and there would be no need of any effort on their part. If it was supposed that God in His own spontaneity extended His Grace to some in preference to others, He would have to be regarded as partial. It is therefore to be admitted that, though God is free in extending his mercy, yet in practice He extends it only as a reward to the virtuous or meritorious action of the devotee. God, though all-merciful and free to extend His mercy to all without effort on their part, does not actually do so except on the occasion of the meritorious actions of His devotees. The extension of God's mercy is thus both without cause (*nirhētuka*) and with cause (*sahētuka*).

2. MOKṢA: There is no difference of opinion as to *mokṣa* being the ultimate goal. The *Tenkalais* believe that for those who take to the course of devotion, *mokśa* consists in having the experience of God Himself, but those who take to the path of self-surrender have to render service to God even during the state of release. But the *Vaṭakalais* believe that

249. Kath. Up. 2: 23.
250. Bh. G. 18: 66.
251. L.T. 17: 78.
252. V.S. 2.1: 34.

whatever be the courses adopted by the individuals, they become released without any distinction among themselves. They have therefore occasions for experience of God as well as service.

3. MEANS OF MOKṢA : According to the *Tenkalais*, there are five kinds of means, namely, *Karma-yōga*, *Jñāna-yōga*, *Bhakti-yōga*, *Prapatti-yōga* and *Ācāryabhimāna-yōga* for *mokṣa*. They believe that *Prapatti-yōga* is a distinctive means from the rest and also believe that each of these five means is a means by itself. But the *Vaṭakalais* believe that *Bhakti-yōga* is the only other means of *mokṣa* besides *Prapatti-yōga*. *Karma-yōga* and *Jñāna-yōga* are only stages leading to *Bhakti-yōga*. *Karma-yōga* is actually self-purification which destroys egoism and leads to *Jñana-yōga* which is the process of self-realization by self-renunciation, contemplation and the attainment of the orison of *Kaivalya*. The third stage is the *Bhakti-yōga* which is unitive life of beholding God face to face or spirit to spirit. This is the highest realization of reality. Respect for the teacher, according to this school, is only a phase of *Prapatti-yōga*.

4. LAKṢMĪ (status) : Lakśmī occupies an important position in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. But as there are only three categories in the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite system, a question may naturally arise regarding the position of Lakṣmī in the three-fold categories of *Cit*, *Acit* and *Īśvara*. On this point, the *Tenkalais* hold that Lakṣmī is by nature atomic in size and occupies a special and unique place of her own below that of Bhagavāṉ; they relegate Her to the level of *jīva*, the finite being, but is entitled to the service of the selves in this world and to that of the *nityas* and the *muktas* in the world beyond viz., the region of eternal glory (*Nitya-vibhūti*). Bhagavāṉ, according to them, is, however, the sole *upāya* for the attainment of *mokṣa* and Lakṣmī has no part in this in the same way as she has no part in the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the world. The *Vaṭakalais* believe that Lakṣmī is *akāra* and not *makāra* or *jīva* and state that She is an inseparable attribute of Bhagavāṉ as described in *Pāñcarātra*,[253] equally

253. L.T. 4: 1; 2: 15.

infinite and illimitable, without whom the conception of the Lord is impossible.[254] She is not *aṇu* or atomic, but *vibhu* or all-pervasive and omnipresent. They base their argument on the authority of *Viṣṇu-purāṇam*.[255] Lakṣmī, according to them, is in everyway the object of equal veneration and worship as Bhagavān and that our worship is always to the Lord and His spouse. Being inseparable from Him, She participates in all His activities except in the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world. She is *śeśi* to all of us, *bhaddas*, *muktas* and *nityas* as much as Lord Himself. This concept of *Vaṭakalai* school receives support from the following evidences: (a) The Lord declares that *līlā-vibhūti* and *nitya-vibhūti* are the *śeṣa* for Him and Lakṣmī.[256] This means that She is also the *śeṣi* like the Lord; (b) Parācara declared that Viṣṇu represents all coming under the category of male and Lakṣmī those under the female.[257] (c) Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ told Naiñcīyar that he was taught by Rāmānuja that the mention of the Lord in any context must be taken to have included Lakṣmī.[258] This is attested by Parācara Paṭṭar;[259] (d) ŚrīRāmamiśra, the pupil of Rāmānuja declared that Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu together are Brahman;[260] (e) Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār states in his work *Tattva-traya*[261] that the eternal kind of the selves refers to Ādiśeṣa, Garuḍa and others. If, in his view, Lakṣmī was a self, She, being eternal, must have been mentioned here.

5. LAKṢMĪ (power): According to *Tenkalai* school, Viṣṇu alone can grant final emancipation. But Lakṣmī can play

254. Ram. 6.21: 15.
255. V.P. 1.8: 17 and 1.9: 124.
256. *Viśvakśenasamhitā*.
257. V.P. 1.8: 35.
258. RTS. p. 750.
259. *Śrī Guṇaratnakōśa*. 28.
260. This is taken from the author's work *Saḍārthasamkṣepa* cited in the RTS. p. 748.
261. *Tattva-traya*. p. 45.

the role of a mediator between the sinning folk and the Lord; she cannot exercise independent or co-ordinate power in granting salvation. The *Vaṭakalais* believe that both Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī can grant *mokṣa* and they base their argument on *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*[262] and according to them Lakṣmī's redemptive mercy is omnipotent. She is not only the mediator (*puruṣa-kāra*) interceding and pleading for the pardon of the offences of the selves, but also the *upāya* along with Her Lord for the attainment of *mukti* by the *prapanna*. Our service after the attainment of *mukti* extends to Her as much as to Bhagavān. The *Vaṭakalais* say that *mithuna* or unity of the Lord and Śrī is vital to the seeker after salvation. Whatever be the ontological status of Lakṣmī, there is no doubt, that both the sects insist on Her *kṛpā* or mercy as essential to the final release. This beautiful concept is stated in a beautiful way: 'On the one hand, Lakṣmī subdues the retributive will of Īśvara by the beauty of her enticing love and on the other she melts the heart of the sinner by her infinite tenderness'.[263] As the link of love, she mediates between the infinite that is omnipotent and the finite that is impotent, and transforms the majesty of law into the might of mercy. It is perhaps strength (Father) is tempered by sweetness (Mother) and sweetness is supported by strength; the one stimulates and the other to persuade. The *Vaṭakalai* school defends its position on the following evidences: (a) The *Lakṣmītantra* contains a passage which means that the Lord together with Lakṣmī is the protector.[264] The word *'together'* is to mean that Śrī protects the people as much as the Lord. This passage occurs in the context of finding out a means for obtaining *mokṣa*. (b) Śrī is addressed as the *ātmavidyā* and described as awarding the result of *mokṣa*.[265] (c) Parācara Paṭṭar says that he would resort to Śrī at first and then to

262. V.P. 1.9: 118. cf. TVM. 4.5: 11. "vēri māṟāta pūmēl iruppāḷ viṉai tīrkkumē" - 'the occupant of the most fragrant lotus is the Mother who will relieve us of all our sins and bless us'.

263. "Cētanaṉai aruḷālē tiruttum; Īśvaraṉai aḻakālē tiruttum" - SVP., 1: 13.

264. L.T. 28: 14.

265. V.P. 1.9: 120.

the Lord. He desires to do *kainkarya* to the Lord who is together with Lakṣmī. He qualifies the word *'Īśvara'* here by the words *'as the means of the desired object'*. He means evidently that both are the *'upāya'*[266] (d) Parācara Paṭṭar wrote a drama with the name *Lakṣmīkalyāṇa* in which Nammāḻvār is made to ask the Lord for taking him under the refuge of Himself and Lakṣmī.[267] It may be added here that the Lord is referred to as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Śri is the attribute and Nārāyaṇa is having Śrī as His attribute. The substantive and attribute may have independent ontological existence as in the case of blue lotus but as a metaphysical category, it must be only one. This is the way in which the *Vaṭakalai* school maintains its view.

6. VĀTSALYA: The *Tenkalais* define this quality as the Lord's enjoyability of the defects of the *jīvas*. According to them the pardoning Lord is the god of the sinner and He seeks the evil doer more than He does the *sāttvika*, as the target of His Grace. They say that the Lord treats the sins committed by the selves as "enjoyable" like garland, sandal paste and others. He even relishes the physical evil or *doṣa* in the *prapanna* like the mother who embraces with pleasure her dirt-stained child returning from play, or like the cow which licks the slime on the body of the new-born calf. Similarly God would consider even the faults, offences, and short comings of the self as agreeable (*bhogya*).[268] To a lover, the dirt on the person of the beloved is far from being hateful. The *Tenkalais* argue that it is the nature of the forgiveness of the Lord to welcome the sinner and not to penalise him for his wrong doing. They support this theory of theirs by citing the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[269] The *Vaṭakalais*, on the other hand, believe that filial action (*vātsalya*) consists in not taking note of the *doṣa* of the *jīvas*; that is to say, the defects are ignored.[270] They point out that the admission

266. *Aṣṭaśloki*, 6.

267. This is cited by Vedānta Deśika in *Sārasāra*, p. 46.

268. *Mumukṣupaṭi*: Caramaślokaprakaraṇa — Sūt. 27.

269. Rām. 5.18: 3.

270. Sri Srinivasa practises non-apprehension of the sins of His devotees. Vide: Vedanta Desika: *Dayāśataka*, 8.

of the views of the *Tenkalais* would show that sins ought to be committed as they are to be "enjoyed" by God and expiation for the sins done need not be performed.

7. DAYĀ: The *Tenkalais* hold that God's compassion consists in His getting afflicted on noticing that of others. That is to say, it is 'para duhkē duhkitvam' entering into the sorrows of others and experiencing the suffering of others as one's own. They support this view by quoting the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[271] To the *Vaṭakalais*, compassion or *dayā* consists of an active sympathy on His part, as manifested in His desire to remove the suffering of others on account of His inability to bear such miseries. In the case of those who could not physically remove others' distress, it must be taken to mean entertainment of a desire to remove others' distress. It must include the removal of others' distress in the case of a person who has the power to do so. So in the *Vaṭakalai* view, the *Tenkalai* opinion amounts to saying that God will always be in suffering since all the living beings are mostly in a state of suffering. Again to suffer Himself at others' distress will have to be treated as a defect (*doṣa*) which would run counter to the concept of God as the abode of auspicious qualities which are opposed to defects (*heyapratyanīka*). The passage from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is cited here must be taken to mean that Rāma was not in the least really affected but was acting the role of a protector of people where the definition of the *Tenkalai* school would be applicable. This school seeks the evidence of Parācara Paṭṭar,[272] Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai[273] and Sudarśanasūri[274] who interpreted *dayā* as inability to bear others' misery.

8. PRAPATTI: According to the *Tenkalais*, *prapatti* consists in the absence of any initiative on the part of the individual, as God's love is spontaneous and will, of itself, bring salvation. Or, it may be taken to mean the knowledge

---

271. Rām. 2.2: 40.
272. *Śrī Raṅgarājastavam* 2: 98.
273. *Gadyatrayavyākhyāna* p. 42.
274. ibid. p. 42.

of one's own self as the *śeṣa* of the Lord. They interpret *prapatti* not as a human endeavour, but a mere faith in the Grace of God. A *jīva* who is completely dependent upon God cannot practise it. The *Vaṭakalais* say that before resorting to self-surrender or *prapatti* there must be self-effort. It is only when this self-effort fails to lead the realization of God, and in consequence a feeling of complete helplessness and unalloyed faith in God's Grace is firmly entertained, that one can resort to *prapatti*. It is, therefore, in their view, in the form of practising the act of surrender of one's self. It does not consist in merely possessing the knowledge of one's dependence. The saying of the *Upaniṣad* "with a desire to get released, I seek shelter",[275] the saying of *Bhagavad-gītā* "you take shelter under Me alone"[276] and the saying of *Lakṣmītantra* "The Lord expects from the *jīva* the need for protection"[277] support that the act of surrender has to be practised. The paradox of *prapatti śāstra* arises from the Viśiṣṭadvaitic truth that the *sarvā-śeṣi* is both the *upāya* and *upēya*, the means as well as the goal of *Vedāntic* life, and it leads to the dualism between the spiritual effort of the *jīva* and the spontaneity of Divine Grace. The *Vaṭakalai* school asserts that the soul must exert itself, show a contrition of heart and deathless faith in the Saviour, as the way of opening the flood gates of *kṛpā* and employs the anology of the young monkey clinging to the mother for protection (*markaṭa-nyāya*) to illustrate the soul seeking refuge at the Feet of the Saviour. The other party asserts that God's Grace is like the care of the mother-cat carrying the kitten in its mouth (*mārjāra-nyāya*) which is independent of all efforts on the part of the latter illustrating that the soul requires no self-effort.[278]

275. Sv. Up. 6: 18.
276 Bh. G. 18: 66.
277. L T. 17: 78.
278. There is a tendency among some of the philosophers to compare the *Vaṭakalai* and *Tenkalai* views to the volitional type and the self-surrender type mentioned by William James in his *Varieties o Religious Experience*, and the Christian distinction between justification by works and justification by faith. But the comparison is superficial as the distinction between those two types is entirely different from the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite views of *sahētuka katāksa* and *nirhētuka katākṣa*.

9. QUALIFICATIONS TO DO PRAPATTI : As regards the person who is qualified for *prapatti*, the *Tenkalais* base their authority on the *Gītā*. In the *Gītā* the Lord deals with various attributes as forming subsidiaries to devotion. Finally He asks to give up all duties. This shows that one who follows this cannot have adequate confidence in devotion. Such a person alone, according to them, is fit to take to the path of *prapatti*. Again they say that it is only those who study the Tamil *Prabandhams* can be fit to be called *prapannas*. But the *Vaṭakalais* hold that the qualifications to perform the act of self-surrender are having no other course to adopt, miserable position and inability to tolerate any delay on the part of a devotee. The main requirements for the course of *bhakti* or devotion are a clear philosophic knowledge of the realms of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, the will regorously to undergo the discipline in due order, and the *sāttvic* patience to endure the ills of *prārabdha karma* till it is exhausted or expiated. Yāmuna declares: "I am not devoted to Your Feet. I have nothing and I have no other course to adopt".[279] This makes clear the relative qualifications for the paths of devotion and self-surrender. This does not in any way mean the lack of confidence in the path of devotion on the part of the *mumukṣu*. They do not subscribe to the view that the mere reading of Tamil *Prabandhams* will make one a *prapanna* for, in that case, one who reads the Sanskrit passages in the *Upaniṣads* can become a devotee of God, which is utterly meaningless on the very face of it.

10. GIVING UP THE DHARMAS : The *Tenkalais* think that the person who adopts the path of *prapatti* should give up all scriptural duties assigned to the different stages of life (*āśrama*); for they argue, it is well evidenced in the *Gītā* text that one should give up all one's religious duties and surrender oneself to God. "Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter."[280] They opine that it is no offence at all for the *prapanna* to give up the performance of *nitya*

---

279 *Śiotraratna*, 22.

280. Bh. G. 18:66.

and *naimittika karmas*.[281] But the *Vaṭakalais* think that the scriptural duties which are obligatory should never be given up by those who have taken the course of self-surrender.[282] Whatever is done shall be attended with the giving up attachment to the result.[283] They further hold the view that the scriptural duties, being the commandments of God, should be performed for His satisfaction by these people. Otherwise, they would have to suffer for their negligence. Rāmānuja emphatically remarks that the *nitya* and *naimittika* deeds are to be carried out as they are done to worship God.[284]

11. CONTRADICTION: According to the *Tenkalai* view, the path of devotion is by nature contradictory to the *jīva* who is a *śeṣa* or one who is in tune with the will of God. The paths of duties and of knowledge assume an egoism which contradicts *prapatti*. The *Vaṭakalais*, however, say that the path of devotion is not in any way opposed to the nature of the self, but is opposed to only one's miserable condition. The so-called egoism is but a reference to our own nature as self, and not to *ahaṅkāra*, an evolute of matter.

12. DUTIES OF CASTES: On the social side, the *Tenkalais* feel that the acts of the *prapannas* are amoral and should not be judged by the moral standards applicable to the ordinary men following the rules of *varṇāśrama*, and the question of moral laxity, condemnation or condonation does not arise in their case. Duties prescribed by the *Dharmaśāstra* texts could however be carried out only for keeping the social status; but they are not binding on the *prapannas*. But the *Vaṭakalais* insist on the performance of *svadharma* or the duties relating to one's station in life even in the stage after *prapatti* as *kaiṅkarya* and in conformity with the divine command. They support their view on the strength of *Lakṣmītantra*[285] according to which a learned man shall never violate

281. *Mumukṣu-paṭi* - Caramaślokaprakaraṇam - Sūt. 8.
282. cf. Bh. G. 4:32.
283. vide: *Bhagavadgītā bhāṣya* on 18:6.
284. ibid. on 18: 5, 9
285. L.T. 17: 94.

the conduct prescribed in the *Vedas;* these duties have to be performed at any cost. The Lord declared that the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis* are His commandments Any one violating what one is ordained by them would become a sinner.[286]

13. ACCESSORIES OF THE PATH OF PRAPATTI: The accessories of *prapatti* are counted as six.[287] The *Tenkalais* hold that the man who adopts the path of *prapatti* has no desires to fulfil and thus he may adopt any of these accessories according to his capacity and inclinations of his mind. The *Vaṭakalais,* however, think that even those who follow the path of *prapatti* are not absolutely free from any desire, since they wish to have *bhagavadanubhava,* and do service to God. Though they do not crave for the fulfilment of any other kind of need, it is obligatory upon them to perform all the six accessories as they have been ordained in the scheme.

14. CAUSE FOR THE ACT OF SELF-SURRENDER: On the strength of *Upaniṣadic* saying[288] the *Tenkalais* assert that God's Grace could not be obtained by mere exposition of religious functions and hence the act need not be performed. But the *Vaṭakalais* insist that the act of *prapatti* has to be performed. Their argument is supported by a passage in the *Lakṣmītantra*: "This means is considered by Me as both easy and difficult."[289] They further argue that the passage quoted from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* must be taken to signify the importance of the Lord. It does not indicate that the act of self-surrender shall not be undertaken. If it were to convey this sense, then even *jñāna-yōga* will have to be given up, as there is always God Who by Himself takes care of everything.

15. MEANS OF EXPIATION: The *prapanna* will have their sins absolved by God's forbearance even when they are done voluntarily. Therefore, the *Tenkalais* say, there is no need

---

286. Bh. G. 16: 23.
287. L.T. 17: 60, 61.
288. Mun. Up. 3.2: 3.
289. L.T. 17: 104.

to perform any act of expiation. This receives support from the *Gītā*[290] where the Lord declares that He would free the *prapanna* from all sins. But the *Vaṭakalais* insist that the act of expiation has to be done to get relief from the sinful acts done voluntarily. This will be the course when the *prapanna* has adequate facilities to perform them. According to them, repetition of the act of self-surrender shall be the course to be adopted only when the *prapanna* is helpless.[291].

16. ADORATION OF BHĀGAVATAS: According to *Tenkalai* ideal, the devotees of God shall be treated on a par with one another irrespective of the caste to which they belong. The *prapanna* is a *bhāgavata* and his spiritual worth is not in any way influenced by his birth and social status and it is one of the greatest offences to treat him with indifference, disregard, ill-will or contempt on the ground of caste. The idea of service extends to all castes and outcastes irrespective of the social distinction determined by the *varnāśrama* ideal. They support their ideal on the strength of *Mahābhārata*.[292] The *Vaṭakalais* say that though the devotees of God have certainly to be respected and should on no account be disregarded, the rules of caste which pertain to the body and not to the soul apply as long as the body endures and are not annulled by the act of *prapatti*. There will, of course, be no difference in the attainment of *mokṣa* and there will be no such things as castes in Paramapada, but as long as the body lasts, the *prapanna*, too, however great his devotion to God and however pure his life, has to follow the rules and regulations of castes in social life. "The temple cow is certainly more worthy than other cows inasmuch as its milk, butter and the like are used in the service of God, but on that account, it does not cease to be a cow." Similarly, a man of a low caste shall be respected with the reverence due to a devotee as he is superior to all others in his caste.

17. GOD'S IMMANENCE: The *Tenkalais* say that God, owing to His immense capacity can enter into a soul which is

18. 66.

5, 596.

āsika Parva 108: 32; cf. ibid. 106: 8.

atomic in size to accomplish acts which could not otherwise be accomplished. The *Vaṭakalais* assert that God is immanent in the *jīva* as its *antaryāmin* and there cannot be any place in the world, either animate or inanimate where God is not present, and hence there is no question of God entering any soul.

18. KAIVALYA: This consists in having the experience of self alone, otherwise called self-realization. It may be called a flight of "the Alone to the Alone" in which the self enjoys inner quiet and is self-satisfied. It is different from God-realization. The *Tenkalais* maintain the view that *kaivalya* is not a stage on the road of *mukti* but is mukti itself in which the *mukta* enjoys the 'peace that passeth understanding'. In this state the *mukta* belonging, of course, to an inferior class, is in some corner of Paramapada and has no hope of intuiting God and enjoying the bliss of communion. But the *Vaṭakalais* favour the theory that *Kaivalya* is only a stage on the path to perfection and those who cross it will eventually reach the divine goal.

There are other minor differences also that exist between these sects. Differences of opinion came into being in many other points of practical importance, such as the extent to which pilgrimage could conduce to salvation, the duties of a *prapanna* if he was a *sannyāsin*, the details of ceremonials to be observed on certain special occasions, the extent of the purifying influence of contact with the *bhāgavatas*, the shape of sect mark, etiquette, certain restrictions regarding food and service, the relation between *sannyāsins* and householders, the tonsure of widows and so on and so forth. But they have little philosophical or religious basis or background

The works of the *Tenkalai* school which are mostly in Tamil are complementary to those of the *Vaṭakalais* and not contradictory to them. The eighteen points of difference enumerated above can be reduced to the single problems of *kṛpā* versus *karma* in its aspect of the practice of *upāya*. If salvation is by antecedent merit and justification by effort, it

is said to involve more faith in the inexorability of the moral law of *karma* than in the inescapability arising from Divine Grace. If salavation is by faith and antecedent of grace and guarantees the remission of sin without any condition like remorse, it is said to favour the faith in election and predetermination and the idea of divine arbitrariness which might lead to the toleration of moral laxity and chaos. Vedānta Deśika's view of *vyāja* or occasion seems to be a good reconciliation of the two extreme views. The Lord is Himself the *upāya* and the *upēya* and the true meaning of human responsibility consists in our responsiveness to the call of divine mercy. Even a gesture and change of heart and the feeling of unworthiness shown in an infinitesimal degree on the part of the sinner evokes sympathy and elicits the infinite Grace of the Saviour. A spark of repentance destroys the whole load of *avidyā-karma* and thus an infinite series of *karma* is annihilated by infinitesimal effort. It is the recognition of the fact that endeavour consists in recognizing the futility of endeavour. This view preserves the idea of divine justice and provides for the domination of Divine Grace which is its fruition. And if there is any difference between these schools, it is in the starting point and not in the goal. It is, so to say, in the emphasis of aspects and not in the choice of opposing theories. If it is assumed that the human will is in any way free, it conflicts with divine determinism. It is difficult to take the dilemma by the horns or escape between them or rebut it. *Dayā* is neither won by effort nor forced on the individual soul. If the problem is restated in terms of *Sarīraka Śāstra* and not of *Hētu Śāstra* or logic, the distinction becomes philosophically negligible. *Katākṣa* or grace is neither *sahētuka* no *nirhētuka.* It is based on organic union. Mystic experience is alogical and amoral and it is illegitimate to apply logical and ethical terms to the transcendent law. The gift of grace and self-gift are virtually related like the systole and the diastole of the heart; their relation involves reciprocity and responsiveness. The sucking of the mother's milk by the child is instinctively related to the spontaneous secretion of milk and the two form an organic process in the maintenance of life. It is impossible to divide this unitive process and decide how much it comes from the child and how

much from the mother. Similarly, the *jñāni* is dearest to God, the *śarīrin*, and God is dearest to *jñāni*, the *śarira*, and this organic relation is beyond logical analysis. *Dayā* pours itself fully into the self and the self flows irresistibly into *dayā;* and it is undesirable, so to say, to dissect this living flow into the logical categories of cause and effect.

In conclusion, we may say that the relation between righteousness and redemption in the working of God in human history is a holy mystery which is more worthy of reverential study than analysis of logical categories or philosophical dogmas. The *karma-kṛpā* riddle is the mystery of the religious experience and cannot be lightly dismissed as a theological dogma meant for the ignorant. The vexed problem cannot be solved either by logic or by ethics. It can be dissolved only by the direct intuition of God which is the experience of the Āḷvārs. If such is the case, the distinction between the two schools regarding the working of *kṛpā* is a distinction without much difference.

Chapter XXX

THE ĀḶVĀRS AND THE RĀMĀNUJA SCHOOL OF VAIṢṆAVISM

The composition of the Āḷvārs undoubtedly produced a powerful impression on the Southern school of Vaiṣṇavism which owed its origin and development to the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas*. The Sanskrit sources furnished this Vaiṣṇavite school with sufficient material for the development of its own philosophy. The *Divya Prabandhams* were also influenced if not inspired to a large extent by these Sanskrit sources. The product of the earlier exotic influences was something unique, a devotional lyricism of a type not known earlier in the Tamil country. The entire credit goes to the Āḷvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs for presenting in lyrics emotionally affective material on godhead and godhood. This had a powerful appeal to the exponents of the Viṣistādvaita *Vedānta* who drew copiously from the *Nālāyiram* as their basic texts. This sacred anthology verily provided not only the basis of a speculative philosophy but also a way of life, and bridged the gulf between day-to-day life and religion.

The *Āgamas* enjoyed singular popularity as they governed the conduct of the rituals in the temples. The compositions of the Āḷvārs contained much material that had connection with the *arcā* aspect of God. What they delineated about *arcā* became codified into a system of worship in temples in conformity with the *Āgamas* during the period of Rāmānuja. That pilgrimages to temples for worship had already become a notable feature of Vaiṣṇavism is evident from the fact that the Āḷvārs who not content with mere visits composed hymns in Tamil extolling the greatness of the deities in the several shrines. Nāthamuni made pilgrimages to well-known shrines following the example of the earlier Āḷvārs.

There arose a particular concept, in the post-Rāmānuja period, though the exact period of the name of the Ācārya responsible for it could not be found out, regarding the greatness of certain shrines and their place in the list of holy ones which were considered as fit to be visited. The accounts about such places that are contained in the *Purāṇas* were taken into account for determining the importance of the particular shrine. Along side of them, the recognition that a particular shrine was visited by one or more Ālvārs who sang the glory of the Lord there was the criterion to declare that shrine as more holy or worthy of visit in preference to others about which there is no record of their connection with the Āḷvārs. It is this attitude of the Vaiṣṇavites towards the importance of the temples that was instrumental in giving the first place to ŚrīRaṅgam among the shrines where the deity had his glory sung by all the Āḷvārs. Tirumalai, Tirukkaṇṇapuram, Tirumāliruñcōlai and others come next according to the number of Āḷvārs who visited them. It appears that these shrines at ŚrīRaṅgam, Tirumalai, and Kañci were prominent even before Rāmānuja's time and have definitely got preference over other shrines in the enumeration of the shrines as Kōyil, Tirumalai and Perumāḷ Kōyoil.[1] The services rendered by Tirumalai Nampi and Tirukkacci Nampi to the shrines at Tirumalai and Kāñci respectively bear testimony to the significant place which these two shrines had in the early period of Vaiṣṇavism. The Ācāryas visited certain shrines on account of which they become prominent such as Maturāntakam, Maṇṇārgudi and Tirunārāyaṇapuram. Places like Śri Muṣṇam were already prominent on account of their celebrity handed down by tradition as recorded in the ancient texts like the *Purāṇas*. The *Āgamic* classification of the shrines like *Svayamvyakta*, *Saiddha*, *Ārṣa* and *Mānuṣa* also received recognition while determining the glory of a sacred place, along with its connection with the Āḷvārs.

---

1. The name '*Perumāl Kāyil*' must have been given to keep this shrine distinct from the Saivite shrines of *Kāñci*. cf. In the enumeration of Saivite temples, Chidambaram gets the name *Kōil* perhaps on account of its prominence.

After the compositions of the Āḷvārs became popular, Vaiṣṇavite temples came to have small niches for the Āḷvārs within their enclosures. Nammāḷvār has the unique distinction of presiding over a separate shrine at Āḷvār Tirunagari.[2] Āṇṭāl has a shrine set apart for her in all temples. The other Āḷvars have separate shrines for themselves in the places of their birth. In Āḷvār Tirunakari, the birth place of Nammāḷvār, even the tamarind tree beneath which the Āḷvār meditated, is still preserved.

In all the temples the *Nālāyiram* is recited every day in the morning and evening. The recitors are mostly those who have the right of heredity for doing this service and very often, they are joined by others as well who have training in the recitation. During occassions which could be normally five or six every month, festivals of a moderate nature which are ordinarily two on the average for a month and the *Brahmōtsava* which is annual, the *Divya Prabandham* is recited in front of the deity by the party leading the procession either inside the temple or through the streets in the place where the temple is situated. Those who recited the *Vedas* follow the deity. The recitation of the composition of the Āḷvārs, which has the sanction of the *Āgamas*,[3] is described by Vedānta Deśika as an act which could rid the streets of all impurities in order that the deity could be taken in procession to follow their recitors.[4] Vedānta Deśika is said to have taken part in a dispute at Kañci on the occasion of the festival there, with those who questioned the propriety of singing the Tamil hymns in the presence of the deity in addition to the *Vedic* recitation[5] succeeded in regularising the recitation of the Tamil hymns. On all occasions, the procession which starts, is stopped at a particular place fixed for the purpose and all the music comes to a stop when the *Prabandham* is begun for recitation. After the recitation of the few songs of which there is understanding about their

2. This was visited by Nāthamuni, Vide G.P. p. 72.
3. Īśv. S. 11; 256.
4. R.T.S. p: 72.
5. Introduction to *Saṅkalpasūryodaya*, p. 63.

number is over, the procession starts and after the return of the deity to the temple, the same process is repeated to mark the conclusion of the *Prabandham* recitation. Just before the beginning and conclusion, the recitors are honoured by the temple priests with sathāri. Saṭhāri, it must be understood here, is the image of the God's Feet fixed to the top of a crown-shaped pedestal made of metal with the hoḷlow facing down. To receive it with the bowing head is the greatest honour one can yearn to receive in a temple.[6]

Before the period of Rāmānuja, the festivals were conducted in big temples and in the shrines situated in the places of the birth of the Aḷvārs for ten days, the concluding day coinciding with the day of birth of the Āḷvārs. Thus the Āḷvārs were raised to the status of deities receiving worship in temples like God and had their birth days celebrated in the form of festivals. In some places, there is the regular flagstaff (*dhvajasthambha*) in front of the shrine of the Āḷvārs. The Āḷvār and the deity are taken in procession through the streets on the day of his birth (called *Tirunakṣatram*) and every formality beginning the recitation of the *Prābandham* is observed then as it would be when the deity alone is taken in procession. Saṭhāri and honouring the devotees with it became part and parcel of worshipping the Āḷvār. In due course, this principle and procedure came to be applied to great Ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavāḷamāmunikaḷ who have separate shrines in almost all the temples and have their annual festivals where the procedural details are not different for those obatined when the deity is worshipped. The principle of Saṭhāri gets its applicability here also.

During daily service called '*Tiruvārādhanam*' and ablutions known as '*Tirumañcaṉam*' which take place on occasions, there are certain items which require the recitation of the hymns of the Āḷvārs without which the particular undertaking would be considered incomplete. For instance, there is *mantrapuṣpam* which a person holding the right attends to it,

6. Tiruvaraṅkappeyumāl Araiyar received this honour at Kāñci. Vide. G.P. p. 122.

consists of recitation of the relevant yet fixed passages from the *Vedas* and from the compositions of the Āḻvārs especially the verse of the *Mutal-tiruvantāti* beginning with the words '*ceṉṟāl kuṭaiyām*'[7] and from those of the Ācāryas also. During the ablutions, passages from the *Puruṣa-sūkta* and the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* are at first recited and uniformly a hymn beginning with the words '*veṇṇai aḷainta*' in the composition of Periyāḻvār,[8] where the Āḻvār calls the young Kṛṣṇa who was dusty in his body by taking butter and playing in mud to come to him for taking bath. A person who holds the highest honour for rendering service in a shrine at a particular place may also recite a collection of *ślokas* and Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs which is technically called '*Kaṭṭiyam*'. The verse beginning with the words '*naṭanta kālkaḷ nontavō*' of the *Tiruccanta-viruttam*[9] gets generally included here. The daily recitation of the *Prabandham* begins with the recitation of the '*taṉiyaṉs*' in honour of (i) Vedānta Deśika[10] or Maṇvāḷa-māmuṉikaḷ,[11] (ii) the *Guruparamparā*,[12] (iii) Rāmānuja,[13] (iv) Nammāḻvār[14] (v) all the Āḻvārs and (vi) Periyāḻvār.[15] This is followed by the recitation of Periyāḻvār's *Tirup-pallāṇṭu*. All the five are to be recited before the composition of any Āḻvār is taken up, to be followed by the '*taṉiyans*' of that Āḻvār and then his composition.

During the annual festivals, the deity is taken in procession on the horse-vehicle on the eighth day during the night. The idol of Tirumaṅkaiyḻvār is brought to a particular place to meet the Lord. This is held as marking the occasion

---

7. M. Tv. 5.
8. Periyal. Tm. 2: 4.
9. Tc. V. 61. It is also said that Parācara Paṭṭar prepared a '*Kaṭṭiyam*' to be recited in the temple at Śrī Raṅgam.
10. The verse beginning with '*Rāmānuja dayāpātram*'.
11. The verse beginning with '*Śrīsaila dayāpātram*'.
12. The verse beginning with '*Lakṣmīnāthasamārambham*'.
13. The verse beginning with '*Yonityaameentha*'.
14. The verse beginning with '*Bhūtam saraśca*'.
15. The three verses beginning with '*Gurumukham*'. '*Miṉṉār taṭamatil*' '*Pāṇṭiyaṉ koṇṭāṭa*'.

when the Āḻvār tried to rob the wayfarers of their valuable belongings and use them for feeding the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites. According to the life-account of this Āḻvār, God initiated the Āḻvār in the learning of the *Rahasyas*, when the Āḻvār began to express emotionally the first verse[16] beginning with '*vāṭinēṉ vāṭi*' in the *Periya-tirumoḻi*. The reciters sing the whole hymn, then the Āḻvār is duly honoured and then the procession continues. On the day in the *jyēṣtha* month (corresponding to '*Āṉi*' month of the Tamil calendar) which has the constellation '*Svāti*' the deity in big shrines is taken in procession on the Garuḍa vehicle Periyāḻvār by His side. This day is held in great respect to celebrate the singing of *Pallāṇṭu* by this Āḻvār.[17] All the temples celebrate the birthday of Āṇṭāḷ, usually called '*Tiruvāṭippūrām*' for ten days when the idol of Āṇṭāḷ is taken in procession. In recognition of having composed the *Tiruppāvai*, the idol of Āṇṭāḷ is taken in all places every morning in the Tamil month of *Mārkaḻi* to a tank or lake nearby. The ablutions take place there during the day and the procession returns to the shrine in the evening. This is generally done at least for ten days the last day coinciding with the *Bhōgi* day which precedes the *Poṅkal* (Makara Saṅkarānti) day. Āṇṭāḷ is held to have married ŚrīRaṅganātha on the *Bhōgi* day and in view of this, this day is devoted in all temples to celebrate the marriage of Āṇṭāḷ and Śrī Raṅganātha, if that shrine is there or the presiding deity in that place, inasmuch as there is no formal distinction in Vaiṣṇavism, between Śrī Rāṅganātha and the deity in the other temples. Again, during the month of *Mārkaḻi*, there is a festival conducted in all the temples for twenty days, the first ten which is called '*Pakal-pattu*' and which comes to an end on the day preceding the *Vaikuṇṭa Ēkāthaśi* day and the next ten called '*Irāp-pattu*' starting on the *Vaikuṇṭa Ēkāthaśi* day and lasting for ten days from that day. The *Pakal-pattu* festival was, it is held, started by Nāthamuni when he arranged the Four Thousand verses of the

---

16. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 1.
17. This day is known as the day when the reality of the supreme person (*paratattvanirṇaya*) was settled in the court of Pāṇṭiya by this Āḻvār.

Āḻvārs. The other festival had been begun, it is stated, by Tirumaṉkaiyāḻvār himself. In the latter all the idols of the Āḻvars and Ācāryas are brought to a hall where the deity is seated. They are individually honoured on all the ten days. The three thousand verses of all other Āḻvārs are recited in the first ten days and the thousand verses of Nammāḻvār during the second festival. The composition of Maturakavi is recited on every day in the latter case. In some temples, one of the days in the second festival is devoted to celebrate the composition of Maturakavi Āḻvār. The two festivals are called *Adhyayana Utsava* because the *Divya Prabandham* has been treated to be equal to the *Vedas*.[18] Further, during the festivals celebrated for the deity, or the Āḻvārs, or the Ācāryas, all the four thousand verses of the *Nālāyiram* are recited. The recitation begins with the compositions of the First Three Āḻvārs, *Nāṉmukaṉ-tiruvantāti* of Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār, Nammāḻvār's *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, and *Periya-tiruvantāti*, and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's *Tiruveḻukkūṟṟirukkai*, *Ciṟiya-tirumaṭal* and *Periya-tirumaṭal*. Then follow the compositions of Periyāḻvār and others The descendants of Tiruvaraṅkapperumāḷ Araiyar who taught the *Tiruvāymoḻi* to Rāmānuja recite the *Divya Prabandham* before Śrī Raṅganātha at Śriraṅgam with dance poses and appropriate music.[19] Nearly seven days are declared in a month as days when the *Vedas* should not be studied.[20] The *Nālāyiram* came to be looked upon as *Vedas* in Tamil. The convention of the Vaiṣṇavite school has been that from the *Pūrṇiamā* day in the Tamil month of *Kārttikai* till the end of the *Irāp-pattu* festival, the period is treated as the days when the *Divya Prabandham* should not be recited. During this period all the *taṉiyaṉs* for the *Divya Prabandham* are alone recited, as also the *Tecikap-pirapantam* of Vedānta Deśika and the *Upatēcaratnamālai* of Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ.

---

18. G.P. p. 84. This contains a reference to this festival at Śrī Raṅgam.
19. Nāthamuni set the *Prabandham* to music. G.P. p. 74; for dance poses vide ibid. p. 84.
20. These are called *'Anadhyayana days'*.

The concluding session in a temple either daily or occassionally as in the case of a festival of the presiding deity, or Āḷvār, or Ācārya has an important item called '*cāttumaṛai*' which marks the end of the recitation of both the *Vedas* and the *Nālāyiram*. As in the case of the *Vedas*, there is a general pattern of the commencement of the *Prabhanda cāttumaṛai*. The last two verses of *Tiruppāvai* and the first two verses of *Tiruppallāṇṭu* are recited twice each and then follow the passages which mean the following: 'May the divine command of the respectable Rāmānuja grow strong and grow stronger, with its powers unobstructed in all places or all occasions and at all times. May the divine command of Rāmānuja shine forth every day, pervade to the end of the quarters, for it aims at the welfare of all the worlds. O Lord, please make the glory of Śrī Raṅgam grow strong every day without any trouble'. (This is recited twice). The *Vaṭakalai* school has the *taṉiyaṉs* of Ātreya Rāmānuja[21] and Vedānta Deśika[22] to be recited next. The *Tenkalai* school recites the *taṉiyaṉs* of Tiruvāymoḷippiḷḷai[23] and Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ.[24] This is followed by '*vāḷittirunāmam*'[25] in honour of Vedānta Deśika for *Vaṭakalai* school. This is composed in Tamil and refers to the contrib ıtion made by Deśika. Here Deśika is mentioned as having had the grace of Ātreya Rāmānuja and offered a splendid exposition of Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi* and Rāmānuja's *Śrī Bhāṣya*. This is followed by the expression of long life prayed for Vedānta Deśika which means only the continuation of the traditions set up by him. Among them, are mentioned his clear exposition of the *Tamil Vedas*, his agreement with and therefore cherishing the ideals of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and the epithet *centamiḷ tuppil*' for him which brings out his erudition and proficiency in Tamil and his

21. This begins with the words '*Namōramaṇujāryāye*'
22. This commences with the word '*Rāmānujadayāpātram*'.
23. This begins with the words '*Namah śrīsailanāthāya*'.
24. This commences with the word '*Śrīsailesādapāpātram*'.
25. This consists in the repetition of the name of the Āḷvār or Ācārya who is then glorified associating it with the word 'vāḷi' which expresses the sense of 'wishing for the life' of that Āḷvār or Ācārya as the case may be.

family name '*tuppil*' which also means holy (*tū*) grass (*pul*). In the next passage, there is a prayer for the continuation of tradition of the four *Vedas* and the *Veda* of Nammāḷvār and for the well-being of the worlds. Vedānta Deśika is then wished to live on for one more century. Lastly, it is recited that more praising or admiring the feet of Vedānta Deśika would pave the way for leading a life free from suffering. The day of his birth is then glorified in two verses in which it is mentioned that Vedānta Deśika understood well the worth of Tamil of the lord wearing the Vakuḷa garlands i.e., Nammāḷvār. The *Teṉkalai* school's '*vāḻittirunāmam*' extols Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ as having had the grace of Tiruvāymoḻip-piḷḷai and given a splendid exposition of the contents of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḷvār. Then there is a prayer for the long life of Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ which is finally followed by a prayer for the continuation of the tradition of the *bhāgavatas*, for the well being of Śrī Raṅgam, of the *Tamil Veda* of Saṭhakōpa and of the worlds which are surrounded by the seas and a wish to Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ to live for a century more. Besides, there is a '*vāḻittirunāmam*' for each Āḷvār, which is sung during the celebration of their annual birthday festivals. Each one mentions the number of hymns composed by the particular Āḷvār in whose honour the '*vāḻittirunāman*' is composed. The days of birth of Rāmānuja and Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ are also glorified. Thus the temples, where the rituals are performed according to the *Āgamas*, were brought under the influence of the Āḷvārs' compositions to such an extent that through the efforts of Rāmānuja, every facility is made available to cherish the worth of and celebrate, through glorification, the contributions of the Āḷvārs. The *Tamil Prabandhams* have spread beyond the limits of Tamil Nāṭu and are sung in the temples situated in the Mysore and Andhra States.

The Vaiṣṇavite community has been much influenced by the *Divya Prabandham*. Its importance is so well realized that it has deeply penetrated into every aspect of the life of a Vaiṣṇavite. No marriage in a Vaiṣṇavite family is complete without having Āṇṭāls hymn '*vāraṇamāyiram*'[26] sung in chorus

26. Nac. Tm. 6.

with the bride and bridegroom made to sit facing each other gently rolling the cocoanut at each other. The daily ritual of worshipping the deity in the house is done much in the same way as in the temple, though not so elaborately. At the conclusion of the *pūja* the '*cāttumaṛai*' is conducted much in the way of the temple. Devout Vaiṣṇavites take bath early before sunrise every day in the *Markali* month and recite *Tiruppaḷḷi-eḻucci* of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār and *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ. Again on the occasion of death anniversaries ('*srāddha*') the Vaiṣṇavites arrange for the recitation of all the four thousand verses or at least any portion which they can arrange for. On the thirteenth day from the date of passing away of an elderly person, there is arrangement for the recitation of the *Vedas* and the *Nālāyiram* and those, who have facilities, take also a procession through the main streets of the locality with these recitations. It is not therefore surprising that both the *Srāddha* day and this day are called *Tiruvadhyayana* days.

What a devotee should be like and how should one treat a devotee are in a general way known to have been treated in early Sanskrit sources. The concept of a devotee and of a devote of a devotee, as it is understood in later Vaiṣṇavism, represents a development of these concepts treated in early sources under the influence of the compositions of the Āḷvārs and also the preaching and practice of them by Rāmānuja and his followers for generations. A devotee is not satisfied with what he is able to get due to devotion. He feels immensely pleased when he could share it in the company of other devotees. This practice could be traced to Periyāḷvār asking others to join him and wish for the welfare of the Lord.[27] It is not as if God requires any wishing from the devotees but the devotee cannot even dream that anything untoward could happen to the Lord Whom he loves. Hence his prayer for communion. The devotees of God therefore join together on occasions. They yearn to have such an occasion and are reluctant to leave such a communion

---

27. *Tiruppallāṇṭu*' 4.

easily.[28] They have much respect for one another. In such a communion, every devotee realises that God is the Supreme Person and that he is likely to be His servant to render service at His Feet. At the same time, each devotee feels that as an individual he must show respect to a devotee of God. He must perforce treat himself as inferior in order to treat the other as a person to deserve respect at his hands. Since every *bhakta* has the same feeling towards another, the social status of one becoming the superior and the other inferior disappears and inequalities in life become suppressed. No wonder then that a *bhakta* readily prostrates at the feet of another who does the some for the former. In such gatherings, even if there is a visible indication of few of them holding a definite position of advantage over others as Ācārya or *Ācārya-puruṣa* having an occasion to exhibit in public their rather relatively superior position, they are respected by others who do not mind their position relegated to the background and openly display their humility which has been the hall-mark of culture in India.[29] The behaviour of such men in other gatherings is of a different kind, sometimes smacking of their anxiety to dominate over others.

It is this mental attitude of a Vaiṣṇavite that has been the sole moving force for the efficient conduct of festivals, for which they go in largest numbers, firstly to do service to God and then to other *bhaktas*. One noteworthy feature here is that the *bhakta* is not visiting any shrine for the mere *darśan* as the communities other than those of the Vaiṣṇavites do, but to do service (*kaiṅkarya*) which may be of any kind.[30] Bearing the idol of the deity or reciting the *Veda* and the *Nālāyiram* or simply to follow in the company of a *bhakta* is considered to be service. Since greater facilities are available for discharging one's duty to the *arcā* form of God, people are found to assemble in large numbers on the occasion of a festival.[31] It is this that has been the motive behind the

---

28. cf. the sentiment expressed in *Kuṛaḷ*,, 394.
29. The devout Vaiṣṇavite yearns for becoming a servant of a *bhakta*. Vide: T.E. 10; A.P. 1; cf. TVM 3.7; 5.2.
30. Peri. Tm. 2.1; TVM. 1.4: 11; cf. T. Pv. 29.
31. A.P. 10.

desire of people to spend their life in a sacred place.[32] Even in the present days when people have to go to far-off places for earning their livelihood, the Vaiṣṇavite community is still found to be inhabiting Tirupati, Kāñci, Kumbakonam, Śrī Raṅgam, Śrī Villiputtūr, Āḻvār Tirunakari and other places spending the time in visiting the shrine. Maturakaviyāḻvār's devotion to Nammāḻvār which did not even admit God to receive it, impressed the community to such an extent that the devotion and service to the Ācarya came to be considered as sacred and obligatory as that which is to be shown to God. It is this that made every Vaiṣṇavite seek an enlightened and accomplished Vaiṣṇavite as his Ācarya. A *taṉiyaṉ* which is composed glorifying that Ācarya, is recited daily by the devotee. The annual birthday of the Ācarya is celebrated by each disciple in his house or by all such disciples in a common place.

As an individual, the Vaiṣṇavite uses the word '*Āṭiyēṉ*' which means 'humble self' while referring to himself to another Vaiṣṇavite, thereby putting to practice, in himself, the humble behaviour which he was taught by his Ācarya. The same individual refers to the Vaiṣṇavite before him as '*Tēvar*' or '*Tēvarīr*' which means that the latter is a deity or God for him, which shows that every Vaiṣṇavite must practise in himself, the act of treating any Vaiṣṇavite as God Himself. The daily worship that is done in the house is not referred to by the word '*pūja*' which is quite common among the Indians but by the word '*ārādhana*' which means the act of delighting another. The deity must be served in such a manner by the devotee that he deights the former by his intense devotion and service. The same word '*ārādhana*' is used also while respecting the Ācarya and any great devout Vaiṣṇavite. The devotee uses the word '*kuṭicai*' (hut) to refer his abode however magnificent it may be and the word '*tirumāḷikai*' (mansion) whatever be the insignificant nature of the residence of the Vaiṣṇavite whose abode is referred to. While welcoming a Vaiṣṇavite one uses the expression '*Eḻuntaruḷa vēṇṭum*' meaning that he is requested to be with him and confer on him his blessings. All these expressions

32. Peri. Tm. 4.4 : 7.

reveal very clearly how the Vaiṣṇavite community has been trained to treat the *bhaktas* or for that matter any Vaiṣṇavite, by extending to them the regard which they would show to God Himself. An enlightened attitude of this kind could not have come to prevail but for the preaching of the compositions of the Āḷvārs by Nāthamuni and all his followers in the succeeding generations. This has so much permeated the community that no one feels the need for questioning the authority of this kind of behaviour or entertaining any doubt about it. The expressions '*aṭiyār*' meaning a servant willing to render services, '*toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi*' and '*toṇṭaṉukkut-toṇṭaṉ*'[33] - all reveal how the influence of the Āḷvārs' compositions has impressed the community.[34] In fact, the names of Āḷvārs such as Saṭhakōpaṉ, Maturakavi, Viṣṇucittaṉ, Parakālaṉ are quite common and are borne by the people. The names '*Āṇṭāḷ*' and '*Kōtai*' are frequently had by the women of the community and some times by the members of the Saivite community also. Nextly, 'Rāmānuja' and 'Deśika' are too familiar names of the Ācāryas now held by the Vaiṣṇavites. While writing letters one refers to himself as 'caramāvādhi dāsa' meaning that he chooses to be the servant at the lowermost rung of the ladder which is marked by at least six people who are treated by him as his Ācāryas.[35]

The enlightened attitude of a devotee is such that a particular devotee is admitted to have the freedom and right to sell away another devotee to any one, since the latter feels that he is a devotee of the former.[36] It must be remembered in this connection that the word '*bhakti*' is used to refer to the devotion of a self for God and also to the respect which a self has for a devotee. This suggests that the devotee is held in much veneration by others. This is proof that like God, a *bhakta* is the *śeṣi* while a self, as he is to God, is the *śeṣa* to that *bhakta*. Naturally, the conclusion that could be

33. TVM. 6.9: 11.
34 ibid. 5.6: 11; 8.10: 11.
35. cf. Periyal. Tm. 1.1: 6; TVM. 1.10: 3; 2.7: 1; 3.7: 8 to 10; Peri Tm. 4.9: 9.
36. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 10.

drawn from this is that every self considers himself to be the property (*svam*) of the devotee whom he addresses as *svāmin* (the possessor of himself, the property).[37] This attitude has grown as a result of the imbibing of the essence of what the Āḷvārs preached through their compositions.[38] Kulacēkarāḷvār's use of the word '*Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi*'[39] has much significance. The dust clinging to the feet of the devotees is more sacred than the waters of Gaṅga. Hence the Vaiṣṇavite tradition believes in the practice of taking the *Śrīpāda tīrttam* of reverential persons. Such devotees are called '*Tōṇṭar*' as they render service to God.[40]

Man cannot but commit sins on account of his ignorance of the nature of Reality. Lack of training in good directions is mainly responsible for this condition. A proper understanding and realization of the need for leading a good ethical life could be achieved by the study of the sacred texts but it is found even persons who have this kind of training do err. So an easier and surer means of correcting one's evil behaviour lies in worshipping the devotees of God. Those who have realized that they are the last devotees (*caramāvādhi-dāsa*) are capable of purifying those who came into contact with them.[41] The moment one makes up his mind to serve the devotees, one is absolved of one's sins.[42] Even though one would have become a greater sinner by violating the laws of God, one has to get rid of them only by bowing to the devotees. He who bears with patience the harsh words that are uttered by the devotees of God is verily the Vaiṣṇavite.[43] The Vaiṣṇavite community of the present day may not be aware of these sources which prove the need for joining the company of the devotees but has been trained by the earlier generations of Vaiṣṇavites to involuntarily seek the company

---

37. A.P. 1; Peri. Tm. 8.10: 3. cf. TVM. 3.7: 1.
38. This is due to the influence of TVM. 3.7: 9.
39. Perum. Tm. 2: 2.
40. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.1; T.M. 45.
41. *Liṅgapurāṇam* - uttarabhāga 4.9: 10.
42. TVM. 8.10: 1; Periyal. Tm. 1.1: 9.
43. cf *Liṅgapurāṇam* 2.4: 9, 10.

of the *bhaktas* and *bhāgavatas.* This may not appear to be peculiar on the face of it to Vaiṣṇavism; but, while they are received as guests in houses and mingle in congregations, the behaviour would show that these traits have penetrated deep into the life of the Vaiṣṇavites only. It is this that explains why men and women, both young and old, proceed to the abode of a great *bhakta* and pay their respects to them. The words '*taṇṭam camarppittal*' which means literally 'offering oneself before the respectable persons like a stick' convey how willingly the Vaiṣṇavites have been trained to lie prostrate at the feet of a Vaiṣṇavite and these are accompanied by the use of the words '*Aṭiyēn tāsaṉ*' revealing that the man who bows reveals his humility and refers to himself as a servant ready to carry out any command that he would be called upon to do. Thus these people get the evil effects of the previous deeds removed without themselves being aware of it. These expressions and the concepts underlying their usages have not come to prevail from any Sanskrit source. Having been used by the Āḻvārs, they have found their rightful place in the life of the Ācāryas and have been continuing to the present day.

On the model of reciting the *Divya Prabandham* there has come into existence the system of congregational prayer of which two phases could be mentioned here. One is the singing of the *Tiruppāvai* by a band of singers in the early mornings of the Tamil month of *Mārkaḻi.* This is done by the devotees going round the streets of the locality singing the *Tiruppāvai* in chorus to the accompaniment of the drone (*ṣruti*) and the drum.[44] Āṇṭāḷ herself made a reference to this as '*Caṅkat-tamiḻ mālai*'[45] (a garland of verses to be sung in chorus). The other kind is singing the names of God called '*nāmāvaḷis*'.[46] The Āḻvārs make reference to the latter kind.[47] Both the kinds come under the *bhajana* type of singing and is a

44. This kind of group-singing is in vogue at Tiruvaiyāṟu when musicians sing the *Pañcarātra kṛtis* of Tyāgaraja.

45. T.Pv. 30.

46. These are in vogue specially among the *bhajana* parties.

47. TVM. 3.5 : 1.

mode of worshipping the Lord.[48] Some of the participants grow rapturous and also dance to the subdued resonant sounds of the drum.[49] Congregational prayers are of common occurrence and particularly on every Saturday evening, on the *Śrī Jayanti, Śrī Rāmanavami, Vaikuṇṭa Ekādaśi* and similar other occasions. People with deep devotion arrange themselves in more than one *bhajana* party and follow the deity on occasions of festivals through the streets. The participation in *bhajana* parties like this produces a refreshing effect. The material prosperity has come to be looked upon as an appendage and so wealth has been spent for the construction of halls for congregational prayers (*bhajana maṭhs*) and for the creation of trusts to conduct such prayers on occasions. The time spent by people in participating in these prayers is usefully spent. It chastens the soul and promotes the development of good will among the people. Here again, the Āḷvārs' compositions as taught and preached by the Ācāryas have been more instrumental for the development of this spirit among the Vaiṣṇavites particularly among those who occupy rather a low status spiritually and economically also. It is not as if, all other compositions, which are in Sanskrit, are forbidden to be used here. For instance, the *Gopikā-gītā*[50] and *Mukundamāla* have frequent uses in group singing. The commonest form of *bhajana* has taken the shape of repeating the God's names as many times as possible. The *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*[51] suggests this and more has been contributed in this direction by the Āḷvārs.[52]

Ever since Rāmānuja passed away, the word '*Rāmānujāaye divyājña*' is repeated every day during *cāttumaṛai* both in the houses and temples. If trust could be placed on the information contained in the source books, Rāmānuja is said to have addressed his disciples thrice when he was about to lay down his mortal frame. The first address was

48. ibid. 2.7.
49. ibid. 3.5 : 2. cf. ibid. 5.2.
50. Bhāg. P. 10.31.
51. V.P. 3.7 : 33.
52. TVM. 2.7; M.Tv. 51, 66; I.Tv. 50.

to ask them not to lament his death. He warned them that if they did so, they would have no relationship to the feet of Āḷavantār.[53] The second address was delivered to the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites to the effect that the Vaiṣṇavites have six services[54] to discharge as long as they live on earth. They are: (i) the *Śrī Bhāṣya* should be studied and taught to others; (ii) if one is not qualified for this, then he shall show regard to the composition of Nammāḷvār, thereby indicating that the *Tiruvāymoḷi* should be studied and taught to others; (iii) one shall reside in any one of the places of the Lord, which means that a place where is a shrine for the Lord should be selected for residence; (iv) service is to be rendered to the Lord[55] and from the context, this must mean only in that sacred place; (v) reflecting or the constant meditation of the *Dvaya-mantra;* (vi) rendering service by becoming the friend of and following the *prapannas.* The use of the expression, 'when there is no qualification', must be taken to be implied in the succeeding cases also, as otherwise, there would result the absurd conclusion that all the five except the first will have to be attended to at one and the same time. This is also recounted in Tamil. The second *kaiṅkarya* is related to the compositions which is referred to as '*aruḷic-ceyal*' which means 'composing after conferring a blessing on the listeners'. Such expressions are used by a writer with reference to the compositions of the Ācāryas whose words are held as authority. In the context, this may be taken to refer to all the Four Thousand verses of the Āḷvārs. A verse in Sanskrit is cited in this context which means that the *kaṅkarya*, which is mentioned as the fourth, shall be discharged by residing in Tirunārāyaṇapuram in the Mysore state[56] Vedānta Deśika enumerates all these three in succession,[57] but mentions five only among them, omitting the third. It is impossible to

53. RTS. pp. 560, 561.
54. This is given in the form of a verse in Sanskrit, vide G.P. p. 190.
55. cf. TVM. 2.6: 5; 3.3: 1.
56. vide G.P., p. 190. The mention of Tirunārāyaṇapuram must be taken to imply an illustration here and so any sacred place may be taken to have been mentioned here.
57. RTS. pp. 562-563.

infer that Rāmānuja did not, according to Vedānta Deśika, include this. From the context containing three addresses Deśika, suggests that a holy place is one where the devotees dwell[58] and a Vaiṣṇavite shall reside where the Ācaryas are honoured[59] and make a slashing remark[60] that even the seven sacred places[61] would cease to be sacred if they do not appeal to the liking of the devotees of Viṣṇu. The third address is regarding the conduct and behaviour of his devotees in society. It can be stated as in the following lines: 'In this life on earth, find out by careful discrimination your friends, enemies and the indifferent. Śrī Vaiṣṇavites are your friends; those who hate God, are your enemies; the worldly are the indifferent ones. Let your heart rejoice at the sight of friends as though you have come across fine betel, flowers and scents. At the sight of your enemies let your heart tremble as though you have faced a snake, a tiger, fire and so forth. At the sight of the indifferent, do not mind them as you would not mind stocks and stones before you. Such should be the conduct of those who have taken refuge in God. Association with your friends, the Vaiṣṇavites, will confer spiritual illumination on you. Shun the company of your enemies and the indifferent too, do not talk to them, never show respect to them in consideration of the worldly benefits thereby accruing to you, for such benefits are sure to make you soon an enemy of God. Remembering that the All-merciful Being is ready to supply you all that you pray for, never beg of your enemies.'

Among these, the first is of the nature of advice or direction and could not be referred to as command. Evidently, the second and third addresses which enumerate the services that are to be rendered by a Vaiṣṇavite according to his capacity and treat the attitude of a devotee in social

58. ibid. pp. 620-621.
59. ibid. pp. 622-623.
60. ibid. p. 634.
61. Ayōdhya, Mathura, Māya, Kāsi, Kāñci, Avanti and Dvāraka are mentioned as the seven sacred cities which enable those who reside there get *mokṣa*.

Himself is said to have composed this, this composition can be treated on a par with the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The musical melody which the hills are resonant with can be treated as not different from the chant of *Sāma-veda*. The Lord has sung this by entering the interior of the Āḻvār.[116]

Raṅgarāmānujamuni (c. 1650 A.D.) the commentator on the main *Upaniṣads*, *Śurutaprakāśikā* and works of Vedānta Deśika, wrote a Sanskrit commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. It is on the model of *Ārāyirap-paṭi* and should have been written to make the *Tiruvāymoḻi* popular among those who do not know Tamil.

Periya Parakāḷasvāmin (c. 1700) commented on the *Ārāyiraplpaṭi* in his work called *Eighteen Thousand* (*Patineṇṇāyirap-paṭi*) which is written in a *śāstric* manner explaining the meaning of each word, offering critical exposition for each verse. He refers to the views of Rāmānuja[117] and Nañcīyar.[118] The exposition of verse 10.8: 9 is superb and the conclusion drawn on 10.10: 10 gives a well-reasoned exposition of the tenets of the Vaiṣṇavite school in the light of the tradition of the *Drāvida Veda*. Like Vedānta Deśika this author gives at the end of the work, in the *maṇipravāḷa* style, the substance of each decad in the *Tiruvāymoḻi*.

Of all these commentaries, the commentary of the Vedānta Rāmānujasvāmin (c. 1700 A.D) who was also reputed as Sākṣātsvāmin seems to be an ideal exposition. It gives an accurate explanation with sufficient criticism on the commentary of Piḷḷāṉ. Almost every word in the *Ārāyirap-paṭi* is taken up and explained. This commentary which is known as *Twenty-four Thousand* is written in the manner of *bhāṣyas* on the Sanskrit *Śāstrā* texts. For instance, the gloss on 4.4: 4 is ably expounded by citing and identifying the passage in the *Ārāyirap-paṭi* as expository of the passage in the *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam*.[119] Piḷḷāṉ's gloss on T.V.M. 4.3: 3 is strictly

116. cf. Peri. Tm. 8.10: 9; T.V.M. 10.8: 1.

117. *Eighteen Thousand* on 10.7: 1.

118. ibid., 10.7: 3; the commentator defends Nañcīyar's interpretation on 10.10: 10.

119. T.N. 24.

life must be taken to stand for the divine command. Curiously enough, the *Yatīndra-pravaṇa-prabhāva* mentions Rāmānuja to have appeared in the dream of Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ and asked him to study *Śrī Bhāṣya* at Kāñci under Kiṭāmpi Nāyaṉar, the grand disciple of Vedanta Deśika and then propagate the commentaries on the compositions of the Āḻvārs [62] Earlier in his life, Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ was asked by his preceptor Tiruvāymoḻip-piḷḷai to study the *Śr Bhāṣya* only once and remain at Śrī Raṅgam by devoting all his life for the propagation of the *Nālāyiram.*[63] Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ's proficiency in the *Nyāya, Mīmāmsa* and *Vyākaraṇa* systems was amazing that he established his superiority in argumentation to the scholars at Kāñci.[64] Rāmānuja's command was that only he who is not competent to study and teach the *Śrī Bhāṣya* to others, could devote his time to the study and teaching of the *Divya Prabandham* Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ was quite competent to carry out the first mentioned *kaiṅkarya* It must be remembered that free and wide choice was not intended by Rāmānuja to be exercised in the selection of the *kaiṅkarya* from the list. Lack of competence of a person to take up a particular service among those enumerated here must be deemed to qualify that person to take up the service mentioned next to that. Rāmānuja would not have meant that a selection of a particular *kaiṅkarya* should be left to the free will of the individual who would be taking to that ignoring completely the divine command of Rāmānuja. It is only the command of the Ācārya, that is Tiruvāymoḻip-piḷḷai and not any other consideration that mattered most for Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ in the selection of *kaiṅkarya* which is now mostly adopted by the adherents of the *Tenkalai* school. The study and teaching of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* and of *Divya Prabandham*, residence in a holy place, and rendering service in any capacity to that deity were included in order to enable all Vaiṣṇavites who are competent to discharge one duty or other. The other two services would enable all others who could not do

62. *Yatīndrapravaṇa-prabhāva*, p. 42
63. ibid. p. 31.
64. ibid. p. 43.

any of the above services to be in the Vaiṣṇavite fold so as to give others the delight of being in the gathering of the *bhaktas*. It is saddening to note that this all comprehensive scope of Rāmānuja's command has been lost sight of and narrowed down to have limited applicability not on account of incompetence but because of the exercise of the individual's free will. The expression '*Rāmānujācārya divyājña*' is repeated as a parrot does every day in every temple, and houses also without realizing the full implication of the holy command.

The *Brahma-sūtras* and Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi* gained importance in the days before Rāmānuja's. Since both represent the *Upaniṣadic* teachings, both come to be referred to as *Vedānta*. Through his commentary *Śrī Bhāṣya* on the *Brahma-sūtras*, Rāmānuja established the import of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. The scholars who immediately preceded Rāmānuja were fully aware of the import of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as taught by Āḷavantār.[65] Rāmānuja who was initiated in the study of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*[66] by Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ, realized the importance of this composition for Vaiṣṇavism and so authorised Piḷḷāṉ to compose a commentary on this sacred work. He made him also the chief person to be in charge of both the *Vedāntas*.[67] That the Vaiṣṇavite tradition treats the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as Vedānta is evident from the references made by later writers to it as *Drāmidōpaniṣad*,[68] which means *Upaniṣad* in Tamil. In his *taṉiyaṉ*[69] composed in honour of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* Nāthamuni referred to it as representing the essence of the *Upaniṣad* (*Chāṇḍogya*) of the *Sāma-veda*. The first hymn in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* has four lines. The first line which means that the Lord is bliss which is unsurpassed represents the contents of chapters I and II of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The second line which means that the

65. *Yatirājavaibhavam*, 1 which refers to Tirumalai Nampi.

66. *Rāmānuja Aṣtottara satanāmaśtotra*, 6. Here Rāmānuja is referred to as Vedānta dvyasārajña, that is, one who knows the essence of the two *Vedāntas*.

67. ibid. 108.

68. cf. *Dramidōpaniṣad-sāra*.

69. This begins with '*Baktāmṛtam*'.

Lord has given the Āḷvār the knowledge which is free from ignorance and also devotion, represents the contents of its chapter III. The third and fourth lines mean that the Lord is the head of all the gods and the appeal is made to worship the fact of that Lord which would destroy all miseries and these represent the contents of Chapter IV of Vyāsa's work. The two *Vedāntas* have been connected as supplementing each other. The full import of one is not fully understandable without the proper appreciation of the contents of the other.

Even to those who are not Śrī Vaiṣṇavites the hymns of the Āḷvārs and the compositions of Rāmānuja and his followers have brought a particular liking. It is readily admitted that discourses on any episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are enlivened only by the citations and expositions of the hymns of the Āḷvārs as recorded in the works of Parācara Paṭṭar, Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇvāḷamāmuṉikaḷ and others. Of course, there is a regular programme of such discourses running to months even in certain places like Madras, Tiruccirappalli, Coimbatore and in the north Indian cities also like Bombay and Delhi, not to speak of the arrangement of the *Tiruppāvai* discourses during the month of *Māṛkaḻi*. It is thus evident that the essence of what the Āḷvārs intended to convey to humanity through their compositions has been propagated by the Ācāryas and besides propagating it, put it also in their practice. The Ācāryas were primarily reponsible to make it permeate into the conduct of the temple ritual and into the routine life of a Vaiṣṇavite. This has resulted in the moulding of the character of a Vaiṣṇavite who strives earnestly to live up to the high ideals which he inherits form his own family, Ācārya and *bhāgavatas*. Strifes and quarrels would have become ended if these ideals are kept in view by every Vaiṣṇavite, so that Rāmānuja's divine command would stand true to the description that it is intended to benefit the world.

Chapter XXXI

THE COMMENTARIES ON THE NĀLĀYIRAM

Perhaps the most intellectual among the *Nālāyiram* lyricists, Nammāḷvār, who is extolled as the super-*prapanna* of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, has presented in his *Tiruvāymoḷi* consisting of one thousand and odd hymns the essence of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism and the basis of the Viśiṣṭadvaita philosophy which Rāmānuja later drew liberally on. The *Tiruvāymoḷi* constitutes the *summum bonum* of Śrī Vaiṣṇavite literature and implies and involves the most intimate acquaintance with the details of Śrī Vaiṣṇavite traditions and philosophy. This fact had been realised even in the days of Rāmānuja and a commentary was considered most essential for a proper understanding of the philosophical and the religious purport of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.

It is known from the accounts contained in the *Guruparampara*, that Yāmunācārya taught the *Tiruvāymoḷi* to his disciples offering his own interpretations. Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ who was one of his disciples instructed Rāmānuja on the import of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. The *Guruparampara* refers to a few interpretations where Rāmānuja suggested a different interpretation although he did approve of Yāmuna's interpretation as it was given by Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ. Rāmānuja too taught the significance of the teachings of Nammāḷvār to his disciples. Yāmuna's wish that Nammāḷvār's composition should be properly propagated was fulfilled by Rāmānuja though Piḷḷāṉ whom he asked to write a commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. Tirumalai Nampi, father of Piḷḷāṉ and maternal uncle of Rāmānuja was himself proficient in the interpretation of not only the *Tiruvāymoḷi* but also the other compositions of the *Nālāyiram*. The inheritance which Piḷḷāṉ had from his father was much useful to him in imbibing the authentic exposition of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as it was given to him by Rāmānuja.

During the days of Piḷḷān, Parācara Paṭṭar, Empār, Kiṭāmpi Āccān, Mutaliyāṇṭān and Nañcīyar who were all his contemporaries were equally proficient in the correct exposition of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. It is the only Nañcīyar that wrote a commentary known as *Nine Thousand* on the *Ārāyirappaṭi*. When sevaral preceptors had the unique privilege of discoursing and discussing with others about the interpretation of select verses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, there must have been slightly different approaches made to appreciate the import of certain verses, which could have been just taken note of by the contemporary scholars. Such differences did not get recorded in any commentary till the period of Nampiḷḷai whose disciples Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai took interest to have them recorded in their commentaries.[1] It must be noted in this connection that these two commentators did well in avoiding offering their criticisms on such references to the views of early scholars. Again it is to be admitted that in their zeal to have such matters incorporated, they had found room in their commentaries for some annecdotes[2] which have no relevance in certain cases to the verses that are explained. As anecdotes, they may have value but too often, the context in which they occur is undermined and the real significance of the verse is lost sight of. They are of great value while delivering discourses but not when a composition is commented on in the form of a work.

In order to fulfil the third wish of Yāmunācārya that the compositions of Saṭhakopa should be duly made popular, Rāmānuja authorised Tirukkurukaip-pirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ himself to compose an authoritative gloss on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as taught and expounded by him.[3] The disciple undertook the rather difficult project and completed it successfully.[4] This commentary is known amongst the Vaiṣṇavites as the *Ārāyirappaṭi* or the *Six Thousand* (so called from the number of *granthas*, one *paṭi* or measure consisting of thirty-two letters).[5] The author's

1. cf. *Iṭu* on T.V.M. 4.3; 5.10; 4.10: 2.
2. *Iṭu* on T.V.M. 4.3: 5; 6.7: 1; 6.7: 5; 6.9: 9.
3. G.P. pp. 278–279.
4. U.R.M. 41.
5. *Yāpparuṅkalak-kārikai*-Preface (Com.).

determination of the length of the number of *granthas* reflects his devotion to the Lord Viṣṇu whose story is told in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* in six thousand *grandhas*. This work is the earliest and, in some respects, the best commentary on the hymns of *Tiruvāymoḷi*. It served as the best model upon which many compositions were later written, particularly in the *maṇi-p-pravāḷa* or Tamil-Sanskrit mixed style.

This commentary is not a literal one nor a word-to-word exposition. An authentic exposition is attempted for each verse giving in prose its contents and purport. The authenticity of it is attested by its being the basis for the writing of several super-commentaries on it. Besides, its author Piḷḷāṉ[6] was made the chief exponent of both the *Vedāntas*, that is, Rāmānuja's *Śrī Bhāṣya* and Nammāḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi*.[7] Many of the expressions in Sanskrit which the author employs are taken from Rāmānuja's *Gadyatraya*, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, *Śrī Bhāṣya* and *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya*.[8] While commenting on T.V.M. 1.1 : 2 Piḷḷāṉ writes that this verse establishes that Brahman is distinct from the sentient and the non-sentient. The next verse shows the Lord to be the only *śeṣin*, the Self of the whole world, untouched by the impurities of the world, or the controller of the world. The next three verses establish that the nature, maintenance and other aspects of the world are under the control of the Lord. In his comment on the seventh verse, Piḷḷāṉ cites the *Vedic* and *Purāṇic* passages profusely to show that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa alone is presented in these passages which are not sublated by any *pramāṇa* and thus the stand points of Saṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa and others stand refuted. That Brahmā, Rudra and others could not be Brahman is shown while explaining the eighth verse. Taking up the ninth verse, the commentator remarks that the doctrine of the nihilists would not stand the test. Existence and non-existence when predicted to an object, say Brahman, mean only the different

---

6. He was born in the year *Śrīmnkha* eorrespoding to 1033 A D.
7. *Yatirāja-vaibhavam* 108.
8. The very first sentence is a proof of this feature. cf. Piḷḷāṉ on T.V.M. 1.1: 3; 1.1: 7; 4.5: 1 to 3; 4.10: 1 to 5; 8.1: 1.

stages in which the Brahman is approached. Existence is an attribute at one stage and non-existence at another, both for Brahman which is ever existent. The explanation for the tenth verse seeks to show that Brahman is all-pervasive, that is, pervading the gross objects but also the subtle ones. His presence is not limited by any thing any where and could not be perceived by any one. He is thus only one Supreme Person. The phrase '*vētam vallār*' is interpreted as Śrī Vaiṣṇavites.[9] The word '*toṇṭar*' which means one who serves (the Lord) also is taken to refer to Śrī Vaiṣṇavites.[10] The Āḷvār tells us that the name '*Nārāyaṇa*' must be repeated to get at Him and uttered while worshipping His Feet with flowers. Piḷḷāṉ takes this as meaning the repeating of *Tirumantra*.[11]

Besides writing this commentary, Piḷḷāṉ appears to have offered his own interpretations of not only *Tiruvāymoḷi* but other poems as well like *Tiruppāvai* probably during his discourses on these compositions or probably when his views were required to be offered on select passages of these compositions. Such expositions do not form part of *Ārāyirappaṭi*. The references to these are contained in the commentaries of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai[12], Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai[13] and Preriya Parakālasvmiṉ.[14] The Āḷvār's utterance of his plight through the garb of a beloved shows that the Āḷvār would cry in distress, embrace Him and bow to Him. This is the experience of the Āḷvār.[15] Circumambulating the hill Tirumāliruñcōlai is the proper act which a devotee shall do, according to the Āḷvār. Piḷḷāṉ remarks that this act would endow the devotee with the right knowledge.[16] The word '*perumāyaṉē*' which is

9. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 4.6: 8.
10. ibid. 4.7: 8.
11. ibid. 10.5: 1. 5, 10.
12. His commentary on T.V.M. 5.10:2; 6.4: 8; 6.8; 7.9: 9. 8.1: 6; 8.7: 1; Peri. Tm. 4.6: 9.
13. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 1.3: 10: 1.4: 7; 2.4: 1; 2.4: 5; 5.9: 3; 5.10: 7.3; 7.8: 7; 7.10: 10; 9.8: 8.
14. His commentary on T. Pv. p.203.
15. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 1.4
16. ibid. 2.10: 7.

used as a term of address and which means One Who is of wondrous activities, is interpreted as of the nature of all auspicious qualities.[17] This interpretation is justifiable, as the main qualities of the Lord are required to be meant here for protecting the Āḷvār from worldly distress. Nañcīyar asked Piḷḷāṉ once whether God's presence is to be known through his own nature (*svarūpa)* or His pervasion in the auspicious forms (*divyamaṅgaḷa vigrahā*) or both are acceptable. To this Piḷḷāṉ replied that Rāmānuja, while delivering the discourse on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, accepted only God's pervasion through His nature. Empār, however, remarked them that God pervades the *divyamaṅgaḷa vigrahā* in order to be ever present at the mind of His devoteees who are devoted to Him.[18]

From the language employed here which is called *maṇi-pravāḷa*, it is evident that this kind of language must have been already familiar to Piḷḷāṉ when he learnt the inner significance of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* from Rāmānuja. Anyway, the method of exposition and the nature of language employed by him paved the way for the writing of super-commentaries on the *Ārāyira-p-paṭi* and also independent texts on select and fundamental doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism by Piḷḷai Lokācāryar, Vedānta Deśika and others.

The author of *Oṉpatāyirap-paṭi* or *Nine Thousand* is Nañcīyar whose version of the commentary was in nine thousand *granthas*[19] by way of reflecting his reverence for Śrī Rāmānuja whose *Śrī Bhāṣya* is in nine thousand *granthas*. Nañcīyar secured a copy of the *Ārāyira-p-paṭi* from the hands of his teacher and *guru* Parācara Paṭṭar and found that it required some elaboration. He obtained his *guru's* permission to undertake the great task and accordingly fulfilled it with success. Nañcīyar devoted himself heart and soul to the preparation of this commentary. When Nañcīyar succeeded headship of Śrī Vaiṣṇavites after the death of his *guru* he wanted to have a fair copy of the manus-

17. ibid. 7.1: 1.
18. ibid. 7.3: 1.
19. U.M.R. 42,

cript of his work. On the suggestion of his disciples, he secured the services of one Nampūr Varadarājar who had a fine hand for the task.[20]

Nañcīyar's *Nine Thousand* is a super-commentary on the *Ārāyirap-paṭi* and is for the most part an epitomized rendering of his exposition of Piḷḷān's work. According to him, the word '*avaṉ*' which is repeatedly used in the text T.V.M. 1.1: 1 shows that each quality proves God independently and declares that the Advaita tenet is wrong. The reference made by Nammāḷvār to the taking in of poisoned milk from Pūtana by the Lord is shown by Nañcīyar as the Lord's assurance that the sins of His devotees would not affect Him in any way.[21] While Piḷḷāṉ states that the Āḷvār asks people to bow at the Feet of the Lord, Nañcīyar goes a step further and advises people to repeat uttering the exploits of the Lord, if he could not be visualized for bowing at His Feet.[22] While interpreting the decad 1.8., he writes that the Lord permits for the selves communion with Him by contracting His nature and activities. The Lord devoured the worlds and measured them, without the selves ever requesting Him to do so. This is to prove that He would safeguard the interests even of those who do not expect a need for it and do not therefore make a request to Him for that.[23] His lying on the banyan

20. An interesting story is told that Varadarājar lost the manuscript in the floods of Kāviri which he was crossing with the manuscript tied on his head. However, Lord Raṅganātha appeared in his dream and blessed him with the power to recall the matter written in the lost manuscript and so Varadarājar found no difficulty in writing out the fair copy of the commentary by Nañcīyar. In doing so, he introduced a few interpretations of his own unable to resist the temptation to demonstrate his scholarship which was nothing mean. Nañcīyar was immensely pleased with the intelligent way with which the fair copy of his manuscript had been prepared and embraced him with the affection and delight and called him 'Nampiḷḷai - our son', give the spiritual name '*Tirukkalikaṉṟi-tāsar*' and placed him by his side. From that day onwards Varadarājar was known as Nam Piḷḷai (G.P. pp. 283–284; cf. *Iṭiṯiṉ Tamiḻākkam* Vol. I, pp. 35-38).

21. Nañcīyar on 1.5: 9.

22. ibid. 1.6: 7.

23. ibid. 1.10: 5.

leaf keeping all the worlds within Him is praised by the Āḻvār and is, according to Nañcīyar, proof for His sovereignity (*iśvaratva*).[24] The reference to the Lord's lifting up the world as Varāha serves to show that He had taken the Āḻvār out of the sea of worldly existence.[25] According to Piḷḷāṉ, the Āḻvār requests the Lord to grant him the *puruṣārtha* which, according to Nañcīyar, is that he should be only for Him.[26] The self cannot have full realization of the Lord with the body that is made up of matter. The Lord however permitted even the mortals to have communion with Him during His descents. Yet many could not enjoy His stay then and in order to allow them His presence, the Lord has taken His place on Tirumalai.[27] The Lord in the Tirumalai Hills is free from defects. This absence of defect is not merely a quality in that it does not allow the classification of people as those dear to Him and those not dear to Him. Besides, it is His nature.[28] That the Lord Whose bed is Ādiśeṣa has taken His abode in these Hills proves that He likes these Hills more than Ādiśeṣa.[29] Easy accessibility of the Lord is said to be had in *arcā* form.[30] The general sense in which the phrase '*mūvar ākiṉṟa mūrtti*' is taken is that Lord Viṣṇu presents Himself in three forms, one being His own and the other two those of Brahmā, and Rudra.[31] The supreme position of the Lord is due to the presence of Śrī in His chest.[32] The love-lorn condition of the bride is required to be remedied by applying the white dust to her uttering the Lord's names. Nañcīyar writes that the utterance of the Lord's name would rectify the ailments which are created by having had contact with

---

24. ibid. 2.2: 7.
25. ibid. 2.3: 5.
26. ibid. 2.9.
27. ibid. 3.2.
28. ibid. 3.3: 5.
29. ibid. 3.3: 10.
30. ibid. 3.6.
31. ibid. 3 6: 1. *Twelve Thousand* also offers the same explanation. This could be justified on the strength of the passage in the *Nārāyaṇīya Up*.
32. ibid. 4 5: 2.

deities other than the Lord and the dust of the feet of Śrī Vaiṣṇavites would remove the ailments which rise by the presence of those who are in contact with the deities other than Viṣṇu.[33] The brahmins *(celunilai-tēvar)* who worship the deity at Tiruccenkunrūr are the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites.[34]

It is of great interest to find that the commentaries of Piḷḷāṉ and Nañcīyar are unique in the expositions they contain for the verses of Nammāḻvār. Except for some references to the views of others[35] whose names are not mentioned, Nañcīyar's commentary is free from the mentioning of any exponent and is in this respect similar to the work of Piḷḷāṉ. For a careful reader who takes up both these commentaries together for the understanding of the composition of Nammāḻvār, there is no discrepancy in the interpretation of Nañcīyar of the passages of Piḷḷāṉ. Rather, it must be unquestionably admitted that Nañcīyar's gloss is faithful to *Ārāyira-p-paṭi* and throws much light on the brief exposition of Piḷḷāṉ.

Yet, the later commentators refer to the views of Nañcīyar which are not to be traced to the existing *Nine-Thousand.*[36] For instance, there is mention of *maṅgalā-śāsana* in the *Tiruvāymoḻi*[37] for the devotees of God. To this an objection is raised on the ground that like Periyāḻvār *maṅgalāśāsana* is to be done at first to the Lord and then to His devotees. Nañcīyar remarked that already *maṅgalā-śāsana* was done to the Lord Whose glory stretches all through the seven worlds and it is here that the Āḻvār does it to the devotees of God.[38] The author of *Īṭu* remarks that Nañcīyar actually rejected while commenting on T.V.M. 7.8: 4 what Piḷḷāṉ wrote on T.V.M. 7.8: 2.

---

33. ibid. 4.6: 5.
34. ibid. 8.4: 8.
35. ibid. 5.2.
36. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 4.6.
37. T.V.M. 5.2: 1.
38. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 5.2: 1.

Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷajīyar, a disciple of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai wrote a commentary known as *Twelve Thousand.*[39] The length of the work was decided by the author on a par with the length of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* which consists of twelve-thousand *granthas.*[40] According to the author, the ten centums of *Tiruvāymoḷi* deal respectively with the protector, that is *seṣin*, enjoyability of experience with Him, self, God's liking

39. U.R.M. 45. This commentary *Pannīrāyirap-paṭi*, a later work in point of time to *Twenty-four Thousand* and *Thirty-six Thousand*. But it is placed here in the order of the number.

40. The story of its composition is very interesting by reason of its author having remained an illiterate until his thirty secondth year and having attained bedazzling scholarship at what ordinarily may appear a wrong age for education. There is the amusing story of his meeting a group of students studying something. Out of an innocent curiosity he inquired of them what they were studying. The students knew that the questioner was an illiterate person from the way in which he interrogated them, and in order to fool him they replied that they were studying '*Mucala-Kiśalayam*' (Mucala Kisalayam – the sharp end of pestle. Mucalam-pestle, Kiśalayam-a shoot of a plant. 'Mucala Kisalayam' signifies imbecility, as the pestle cannot be expected to put forth shoots). Such a work did not exist, but the students wanted to indirectly make a big fool of the ignoramus. The illiterate person belived what the students said and asked Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai, his Ācārya, what the '*Mucala-Kiśalayam*' was. The learned Acārya at once understood that the imbecile had been fooled by the young learners and frankly told him that as he was not educated it, had been easy for a set of arrogant students to fool him. The illiterate immediately realized the danger of his being illiterate and prostrated before Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai to accept him as a student. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai gladly accepted him, in spite of his over age, as his pupil and taught him from the scrap. The student was very enthusiastic in his learning and in the long run the learned Ācārya taught him *Kāvyas, Nāṭakas, Alaṅkāra śāstras, Vyākaraṇam* and *Pūrva Mīmāmsā* and *Uttara-Mīmānsa*. The illiterate very soon emerged as a great scholar and became renowned also as a dialectician and debater, which his name '*Vādi Kēśari*' implies. He fooled those that fooled him by writing a beautiful *Kāvya* entitled *Mucala-Kiśalayam.* His interest in *Tiruvāymoḷi* was profound. He studied all the earlier commentaries and found them above the head of the common man. So he beautifully condensed the elaborate meanings and details and wrote this *Twelve Thousand* in a way which is understandable and easily comprehensible to all.

for the self, the means for *mokṣa*, prayer for His Grace, obstacle to *mokṣa*, its removal, nature of the result and the getting of it.[41]

The importance of this commentary lies in two respects: This is the earliest commentary to offer word for word meaning for each verse and to state the metre in which each decad is composed. While interpreting the decad 1.6., this commentator writes that the Lord would not mind the defects of His devotees. Merely folding the palms out of respect for Him would set aside what is undesirable and make the desired thing obtainable. Removal of what is undesirable depends on His will. Worship of the Lord is recommended by the Āḷvār which is justly interpreted as consisting in offering the *añcali*.[42] The Lord's having Garuḍa as the vehicle is justified as knowable through Vedānta because of the vehicle Garuḍa being of the nature of the *Veda*.[43] Enjoyment of God's presence is stated by the Āḷvār to be delectable like honey, milk, ghee and sugar-cane. It would have been enough if only one had been mentioned for illustration. The mention of so many is to show that God-realization is delectable when viewed from all possible angles.[44] The creation of the world is a proof of His easy accessibility and His descent is intended to afford protection for the things created. His unsurpassed acts, affection for those who resort to Him, enjoyability, and revelation of His greatness even in descents and *arcā* are all meant to demonstrate that everything is subordinated to Him.[45] The Āḷvār refers to himself as the servant of the servants of those who are the servants of God, showing that the series could be extended further on, himself being at the lower-most level. Generally as in hereditary lineage, the seven steps are meant here also. The commentator remarks here that the ideal of a devotee shall be to choose service at

41. Bhag. Viṣ. Vol. I, p. 40.
42. *Twelve Thousand* on T.V.M. 1.6: 8.
43. ibid. 2.2: 10.
44. ibid. 2.3: 1; cf. for a similar interpretation. ibid. 3.5: 6.
45. ibid. 3.6.

the lower-most level of the series and logically, this must be taken to mean that for a devotee, another devotee shall be his *śeṣin* and this shall be further adopted in the series. Thus there is a long series of *śeṣins* as that of *śeṣas*.[46] The verse 6.10:10 is exquisitely interpreted as suggestive of the significance of the *Dvaya-mantra*. This commentary contains here and there some references to the views of Parācara Paṭṭar[47] and others.[48] Tirumalai is a place which is common to the world and Paramapada.[49]

Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai who was the direct disciple of Nampiḷḷai wrote *Twenty-four Thousand* reminiscent of the length of *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*.[50] This commentary contains, besides word for word interpretation, much of what had been handed down by way of tradition. The views of many scholars on the interpretation of some verses, which were not incorporated in the works of Piḷḷāṉ and Nañcīyar, are cited here. This commentary was given publicity by his son Naiṉārāccāṉ Piḷḷai.

In the introductory portion, this commentator writes that the descent of the Āḻvār on earth is due to the good deeds

46. ibid. 3.7: 10.
47. ibid. 3.5: 1.
48. ibid. 3.9: 9.
49. ibid. 1.8: 3.
50. U.R.M. 43: There is the interesting story of how he happened to write the commentary. A grandson of Kūrattāḻvāṉ, Naṭuvil Tiru-vīti-p-piḷḷai Paṭṭar by name, was studying *Tiruvāymoḻi* at the feet of Nampaḷḷai. The disciple committed to writing every night what he had listened to from his learned teacher that day. At the end of the course the student discovered that he had written down a commentary in one lakh and twenty-five thousand *granthas*. This he showed to his master who was provoked that the student had done the work without his approval and took it from him and cast it away as food for white ants. However, Nampiḷḷai realized later that a new version of *Tiruvāymoḻi-commentary* was necessary and so he charged his most brilliant disciple Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai who had studied all the *śāstras* in every detail to write it out. And thus the commentary had to be written by Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai (Vide G.P. pp. 299–301; and cf. *Iṭṭiṉ Tamiḻākkam* Vol. I, pp. 39–41).

of the selves. Much of God-realization which the Āḷvār had experienced is so well presented in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* that it could clear any doubt that may be raised about the import of the *Vedas*, epics and *Purāṇas*.[51]

Nammāḷvār refers to his composition as admired by those who are poets of milk-like Tamil, those who are proficient in music and devotees of God.[52] Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai takes this respectively to refer to the first three Āḷvārs, Maturakaviyāḷvār and Periyāḷvār. He makes references to Parāṅkuśanampi, a disciple of Maturakaviyāḷvār, Tiruvaraṅkapperumāḷ Araiyar and others.[53] Such an interpretation like this requires careful scrutiny. Nammāḷvār should have meant only scholars of Tamil musicians and devotees in a general manner. There is no evidence to show that Nammālvār was aware of the other Āḷvārs as his predecessors. What Nammāḷvār would have meant is not and need not be the same as what the later exponents would like to convey as the sense of this verse. Any attempt as done by this commentator to illustrate this sense by referring to the savants of old and recent years who had achieved distinction in these spheres cannot easily be approved as conveying the import of the verse. It can serve better as an annotation which would serve the purpose through illustrations. Otherwise, anachronism would be the chief defect of interpretations of this kind. In all probability, what Nampiḷḷai had taught by way of annotation was sought to be recorded as much by Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and treated by later generations as meant by Nammāḷvār himself.

The Āḷvār describes the Lord as not male, not female and not eunuch.[54] The commentator shrewdly remarks that this is merely to show that He is *Puruṣottama* but has no compeer.[55] Taking the verse 2.10: 10, the commentator interprets the

---

51. Bhāg. Viṣ. Vol. I, pp. 41-42.
52. T.V.M. 1.5: 11.
53. *Twenty-four Thousand* on T.V.M, 1.5: 11.
54. T.V.M. 2.5: 9.
55. *Twenty-four Thousand* on T.V.M. 2.5: 9.

phrase '*vēṭam mun virittāṉ*' as God's exposition of the sense of the *Vedas* through the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Tirumalai is also spoken of as Ādiśeṣa.[56] Service rendered at a particular holy place by having birth there would enable the removal of sins committed by the enjoyment of prohibited things.[57] The sound produced by the flapping of wings of Garuḍa is taken as that produced by the chantings of the *Sāma-veda*.[58] Tiru-vēṅkaṭam is described as the holy place where the Lord lying on the serpent at ŚrīRaṅgam, stands in order to meet the gods.[59]

While interpreting the verse 4.1: 1, Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai writes that the use of the word '*tirunāraṇaṉ*' means that the deity to be sought after and reached is the divine couple, that is, Nārāyaṇa with Śrī is that deity and the whole thing is the *śeṣa* for this couple.[60] The self gets into mortal life because of not having the knowledge that the Lord is the Supreme Person and because of its feeling that it is independent. To get rid of these two factors, one shall get instructions regarding the supremacy of the Lord.[61] The interpretation which this commentator offers for the verse 6.5: 3 as *vyūha* and *vibhava* forms are experienced in Tolaivilli-maṅgalam, does not appear to be correct, for there is no reference in the original passage to the *vyūha* form. Perhaps Kṛṣṇa, who is no other than Vyūha Vāsudeva, is taken to be referred to here but this in terpretationis evidently far-fetched.

The views of Parācara Paṭṭar,[62] Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ[63], Tiru-malai Nampi,[64] Rāmānuja in reference to those of Āḷavantār

56. ibid. on T.V.M. 3.3: 10.
57. ibid. 3.6.
58. *Twenty-four Thousand* on T.V.M. 3.8: 5.
59. ibid. on T.V.M. 7.2; vide ibid. 4.2: 4; 5.1: 10 for interesting discussions.
60. cf. ibid. 6.8: 1 where the commentator declares that both the *vibūtīs* are subordinated to the couple.
61. ibid. 4.10.
62. ibid. 1.6: 1; 1,10; 2.4: 5; 2.4: 9: 2.5: 9.
63. ibid. 1.7: 6.
64. ibid. 1.4: 8.

and others[65], Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ,[66] Kūrat-tāḻvāṉ,[67] Piḷḷai[68] (Nampiḷḷai) and others are frequently cited. Special mention must be made of the fine expositions of Parācara Paṭṭar on some verses.[69] Many of these citations appear for the first time recorded in this commentary. There are many anecdotes[70] referred to in the commentary whose relevance to the context is better explained by the occasions when the relevant verses were expounded. One of the singular contributions which Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai made through this commentary is that he took the relevant verses from Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and offered interpretations to them.[71].

Īṭu which is also known as *Thirty-six Thousand*, is the commentary prepared by Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai, another disciple of Nampiḷḷai. Being the product written under the guidance of the same preceptor, it bears much likeness to the *Twenty-four Thonsand* of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai. It contains more information than the latter and has been more popular also. The author's ardent devotion to Rāmānuja was reflected in his choice of the number of *granthas* for his commentary. *Śrī Bhāṣya* had a commentary entitled *Śurtaprakāśika* by Sudarśana Paṭṭar in thirty-six thousand *granthas*. On the basis of its length this author also limited his commentary to thirty-six thousand *granthas* and hence the commentary came to be known as *Thirty-six Thousand*.[72] As the real author of

65. ibid. 2.1; 2.3: 1.
66. ibid. 8.8: 5.
67. ibid. 8.9.
68. ibid. 5.9: 7; 6.7: 3.
69. ibid. 2.8; 4.9: 11; 5.7: 10; 6.1: 1, 6.2: 6.
70. cf. ibid. 2.7; 2·9: 2; 6.4: 9; 4.7: 1.
71. cf. ibid. 2.1; 3.5: 4.
72. There is a beautiful legend about how it happened to the world. The author used to take notes from the discourse on the *Tiruvāymoḻi* by his learned preceptor Nampiḷḷai and prepared a fair draft of his lectures with the help of his notes taken. One day he submitted the draft to his master telling him that it was the substance of his (the master's) discourse on the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. The master perused the whole draft and was immensely pleased with it because it was neither too long nor too short and it was to the length of

the work was Nampiḷḷai, the work is generally known as *Nampiḷḷai Īṭu*[73] or simply *Īṭu*.

The name *'Īṭu'* has many interpretations. One meaning of the word *'Īṭu'* is *kavacam* or armour.[74] As an armour, *Īṭu* protected *Tiruvāimoḷi* from fantastic expositions by half-wits and quarter-wits. Another interpretation is based on the circumstance of its being committed to writing by Vaṭakku-t-tiruvīti-p-piḷḷai, *'iṭu'* meaning writing. *'Iṭutal'* means 'writing' in Tamil. Another meaning of the *'iṭu'* is 'equal' in Tamil: "*iṭum eṭuppum il īcaṉ*".[75] *'Iṭu'* here has this meaning. As this work is equal in length to *Śrutaprakāśika*, and as the commentary forms the link or chain binding the God and His devotee, it came to be known as *Īṭu* or the instrument of *'iṭupāṭu'* or engagement with the theme of God. The author of the commentary himself had held the view that it was equal to the greatness of *Tiruvāymoḷi* itself.

This commentary begins with a brief survey of the systems of Indian thought. Seventeen systems get treated here, the conclusion being drawn in favour of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of *Vedānta*. Nammāḷvār was responsible for the interpretation of the *Dvaya-mantra*: The divine couple, Nārāyaṇa with Śrī, is the deity.[76] The concept of *śeṣa* shall

---

Śuutaprakāśika. But as it was committed to writing without his permission, the master took it from his disciple and kept it idle with him. But one of Nampiḷḷai's disciples, Īyuṇṇi Mātavap-perumāḷ by name, was very eager to have the commentary and prayed Lord Raṅganātha to fulfil his desire. To satisfy the '*pēravā*' or the great desire of his devotee and also to bless the world with the commentary, the Lord hinted Nampiḷḷai who had come to worship His Feet through the temple priest to hand over the manuscript to Mātava-p-perumāḷ otherwise known as Ciṟiyāḷvaṉ Appiḷḷai. And thus the commentary came to us. (G.P. pp. 311–12; cf. *Īṭṭiṉ Tamiḻākkam* Vol. I, pp. 41–43).

73. U.R.M. 44, 48, 49.

74. *Patiṟṟp-paṭṭu* 14, 21. Again cf. *Īṭu* 7.5: 9; *Cīvika Cintāmaṇi* 534 (Nacciṉarkkiniyar's Commentary).

75. T.V.M. 1.6: 3.

76. *Thirty-six Thousand*. pp. 89–90 where the passage 1.1: 7 of T.V.M. is cited.

apply to the devotees of God as well as it does with reference to God.[77] While the *Vedānta* prescribes the path of devotion to the twice-born and that of self-surrender to those who have no other path to pursue, Nammāḷvār declares the path of self-surrender as the means for all.[78] The path of self-surrender is not the means for adopting the path of devotion, being an independent means by itself.[79] The second half of the *Dvaya-mantra* is expounded in the centums 1 to 3, its first half in 4 to 6 and the qualities helpful for this in the remaining centums.[80] Among the citations which this work contains to a large number, special mention is to be made of the *Sarva-siddhāntasaṅgraha*[81] of Saṅkara and of the *Tattva-vicāraṇa*[82] of Yādavaprakāśa.

The Lord cannot be known accurately to be of a particular nature but yet He has thousand names. Since He had shown Himself in several places, to several people, He came to be called by the names which came to be associated with His act at the particular places.[83] While interpreting the verse 1.3: 5, this commentator remarks that the word '*bhagavāṉ*' has primary denotation to Him alone while it has secondary application to others. The phrase '*tava neṟi*' does not mean penance but devotion.[84]

This commentator states that all other Āḷvārs are to be treated as forming part of the whole which is Nammāḷvār.[85] This concept must be considered to have developed out of the importance the *Tiruvāymoḻi* gained as a work which came to be studied only through the preceptor. However, the fancied

---

77. ibid., p. 90 where T.V.M. 2.3: 10; 3.1 are cited.
78. ibid. pp. 92-93 where are cited T.V.M. 5.7: 1; 5.7: 10; 5.8: 11; 5.9: 11; 5.10: 11; 10.10: 3.
79. ibid. p. 94.
80. ibid. p. 96.
81. ibid. p. 59.
82. ibid. p. 56.
83. *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 1.3: 4.
84. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.3: 5.
85. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.4: 2.

whole does not appear to have any basis, for like the *Tiruvāymoḻi*, the compositions of other Āḻvārs have their own individual importance and for that reason are not any the less in comparison to the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. The prime cause for the importance of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* lies in the fact that Nāthamuni became the pupil of Nammāḻvār who came therefore to be known as the head of those who have sought shelter under the Lord. Nāthamuni propagated the compositions of other Āḻvārs as well as he did those of Nammāḻvār and all the four thousand verses came to be treated as *Drāvida Veda*. There is no separate treatment of the *Veda* as parts and whole in this *Veda* and this must mean that all the Āḻvārs are to be treated alike as ṛṣis, the ancient seers of truth but Nammāḻvār's composition is supreme as He is. This does not mean that there is anything like the concept of the part and whole among the Āḻvārs. That they occupy a position lower in order to that of Nammāḻvār must however be admitted.

Like Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai, this commentator also offers some interesting observations on T.V.M. 1.5: 11. The musicians are Maturakaviyāḻvār and Nāthamuni. Kūrattāḻvāṉ is said to have referred to Parāṅkuśa-nampi, the disciple of Maturakaviyāḻvār as the Tamil poet. Yāmunācārya is said to have referred to the first three Āḻvārs as Tamil poets, to Tiruppāṇāḻvār as the muscian and Periyāḻvār as devotee.

The sins of the devotees could be removed by Nārāyaṇa because He is the husband of Śrī.[86] Like Śrī, Nappiṉṉai too has *puruṣakāra* for the sake of the selves.[87] Detachment is to be given greater importance than knowledge, as it is clear from Sahadeva declaring Kṛṣṇa as most deserving worship. Hence there was a shower of flowers on his head. This anecdote has relevance to the interpretation of T.V.M, 2.2: 4, for Sahadeva said that he would set his foot on the heads of those who would not admit the overlordship of Viṣṇu. The word *'maṟai'* in T.V.M. 3.1: 10 is interpreted in two ways. It

---

86. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.6: 10.
87. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.7: 8.

means *Veda* and means also that which conceals its own features to those who are unbelievers in the *Vedic* tradition but shows them to those who believe in the *Vedic* tradition.

While interpreting the verse 4.3: 3 this commentator renders *'ēkam'* is the *para* form, *'irumūrtti'* as Vāsudeva and Sankarṣaṇa and *'mūṉṟu mūrtti'* as Pradyumna added to these two. This is not only ingenious but also apt in the light of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition. On the verse 5.7: 11 this commentary states that although the thousand verses convey the sense of the *Vedas*, yet they did not come into being of their own accord like the *Veda*. The *Vedas* occupay a position that is comparable to that of *para* form, the epics and *Purāṇaṣ* as that of the divine descent and these verses that of the *arcā* form. The decad 6.9 is said to expound the *Tirumantra* and 6.10 the *Carama-śloka*. The Tirumalai Hills are said to crown the beauty of the earth and in this respect, are like an ornament that gives pefection to the decoration of women.[88] While commenting on the verse 6.10: 10, it is remarked that *paratva* is far distant and hence beyond the reach of the self. *Vyūha* is enjoyable to Brahmā and others like grains. The divine descents are helpful only for those who are lucky to be present during the periods of those descents and are not useful for others and so are removed from them by time. The Tirumalai Hills do not have any deficiency of this kind and so the Feet of the Lord of Tiruvēṅkaṭam are the refuge.[89] *Paratva* is intended for those who are eternally released, *vyūha* for those who are almost released, that is, those pious selves who could be taken to be released for all purposes but for their possession of the physical frame and *vibhava* for those who have committed good deeds[90]. The Āḻvār uses the word *'kunta'* as the name of the Lord. The commentator remarks that the word *'mukunta'* has become shortened into *kunta*.[91]

---

88. ibid. on T.V.M. 6;10: 2.

89. ibid. on T.V.M. 6.10; 10; cf. ibid. 7.2 for a slightly different version of this.

90. ibid. on T.V.M. 7.3: 3.

91. ibid on T.V.M. 7.9: 7.

Like Periyavāccān Piḷḷai, this commentator also cites several passages from the *Rāmāyaṇa*[92] and *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*[93] and interpets them. Besides citing the views of many earlier exponents like Parācara Paṭṭar,[94] this commentator refers to the views of a scholar who is named Ammāḷ[95] in some contexts and Ammaṅkiyammāḷ[96] in others. It is hard to find out whether these two were identical or different persons. If they were different, then Ammāḷ must be identical with Vātsya Varadācārya who was well known as Naṭātūr Ammāḷ who lived at least upto 1274 A.D., when he blessed Vedānta Deśika (c. 1268 A.D.).

Tiruvāymoḻi Vācakamālai[97] which is also known as *Vivaraṇa-śatakam*, was written by a woman, Tirukkōṉēri Tāśyai. It is mentioned at the end of this commentary that the work was completed in the year *Āṅgirasa* twenty-sixth day of *Mārkaḻi* month.[98] The author dedicated this work at the Feet of Śri Ārāvamutan at the shrine of Kumbakonam. She pays respect to her preceptors, Āḻvār (Nammāḻvār), Emperumāṉār (Rāmānuja), Candragiri Ayyaṉ, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa-jīyar, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr-jīyar and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai. In all probability she was the direct disciple of Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai.[99] Nothing is known about the three teachers who preceded Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai. That she is citing a passage from Vedānta Deśika cannot be proved beyond doubt, as the two words which are supposed to have been cited occur in the reversed order in the work of Vedānta

92. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.4: 3; 1.10: 1; 1 10: 4; 2.2: 5; 2.4: 1; 2.9; 2.10: 4; 2.10: 7; 3.3: 7; 5.5: 10.
93. ibid on T.V.M. 2.7; 3.7 4 4: 3: 6.10.
94. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.6: 11; 1.8; 5.10.
95. idid. on T.V.M. 7.4. 4; 7.6: 10.
96. ibid. on T.V.M. 4.5: 1; 5.9: 10; 8.3: 11; 8.4: 1.
97. For a detailed estimate of this work see Introduction of this work, pp. (62–71).
98 *Tiruvāymoḻi Vācakamālai*, p. 334. The year may correspond to 1273 A.D. or 1213 A.D.
99. He was born in the year *Sarvajit* which corresponds to 1168 A.D.

Dešika.[100] If reliance is placed on this citation, she must have lived posterior to Vedānta Deśika (1268-1369 A.D.) in which case she could not have been a direct disciple of Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai. She could have hailed from the Andhra State, because of some errors crept in in the writing of Tamil in this commentary.[101] Candragiri Ayyan who might have belonged to Candragiri, a place near Tirupati, happended to be in the line of preceptors of this commentator.

One noteworthy feature of this commentary lies in the exposition offered here only for one hundred verses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* justifying the other title *Vivāraṇaśatakam* of the commentary. Secondly, the metre is mentioned in which the particular verse that is taken up for interpretation is composed. Thirdly, the commentator seeks to show that all 1101 verses of *Tirvuāymoḷi* are only expository of the first verse. The commentator must have been taught by her preceptor, the author of the *Īṭu* which speaks of the first ten verses as the epitome of whole work, the first three verses of the decad as the summary of this decad, the first verse that of the first three verses and the first line that of the first verse.[102] The sense of the first verse can be taken up to mean this: 'O mind! worship the Lord's lustrous Feet which destroy the miseries of devotees, the Lord Whose bliss is unsurpassed, Who offers to the devotees the correct knowledge, and Who is the lord of the eternal selves'. This commentator takes up a verse in almost every decad and shows, by way of exposition, that it is only an explanation of the opening verse of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. This is clear from the verse beginning with the words '*oḻivil kālamellām* (3.3: 1). This verse means: 'We have to be steadfast in serving the Lord for all times'. This service shall never break up. The place for rendering service shall be Tiruvēṅkaṭam which resounds with the sounding waterfalls. The Lord Who is to be served is the father of the father of the

100. *Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai*. Int. p.70. cf, Vedānta Deśika's *Nyāsa Tilāka* 22 with *Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai*, p.204.

101. ibid. Int. pp. 60-61.

102. Vide: *Īṭu* - Introduction.

father and is enchantingly radiant'. The commentator explains that the first line refers to the unlimited bliss of the Lord at all times, places and stages. The second line shows that He favours the devotee to do all kinds of service without having any delusion regarding the goal. The third line shows the Lord to be supreme among gods who do verbal service by singing *Sāmaveda*. The waterfalls appear to invite people for visiting the hills and sing His praise. The last line refers to the Lord as the foremost among others. The Feet are said to be lustrous and capable of destroying the miseries. The name '*Vēṅkaṭam*' is significant here and brings out the sense of the word '*tuyar*' which refers to the three *guṇas*, that is three debts[103] and three offences.[104] The lustrous beauty of the Feet sets aside the lustres of the sky, water, light and cognition.[105]

In another verse (4.8: 2), the Āḻvār means that His heart is occupied by Lakṣmī, His hands are charming and strong, He had taken the Āḻvār into His service and He is blue like the emerald. According to the commentator this verse establishes Śrī also as *śeṣi* and also as His *śeṣa*. His arms are strong and award *mokṣa* through knowledge and devotion. He is addressed as '*Ārāvamutē*' in another (5.8:1)[106] meaning that He is delectable and is never satiable. In the exposition of each of these verses, the commentator refers to the *Taittiriya* passage on the gradation of bliss.[107]

There are references to the differences in the interpretations among the early exponents.[108] While Periyāḻvār refers to the extension of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition at least to

---

103. The three debts are for gods, the sages and manes and are discharged by performing the sacrifice, reciting the *Vedas* and begetting children.

104. The three offences are those incurred at God, God's men and by being hostile to God by nature.

105. The commentary bears here the influence of *Īṭu* on TVM 3.3:1.

106. The exposition for T.V.M 9.3; 6.10: 1; 10.6: 1 and 10.7:5 is detailed and highly informative.

107. Taitt. Up. 2: 8.

108. Vide: *Tiruvāymoḻi Vācakamālai* on 1.10: 1.

seven generations,[109] this commentator speaks of it as extending to twenty-one generations.[110] There are few references to the difference in the interpretations of certain passages among the early exponents of Vaiṣṇavism.[111] The interpretation of the word '*catumūrtti*' is generally given in favour of the *vyūha* concept;[112] but according to this commentator, valour, heroism, prowess and others constitute His body which shows that his overlordship is due to His destroying the enemies of His devotees.[113] There is also reference to the dialectal usage of a Tamil word.[114]

In the verse 10.8: 5 the Āḷvār speaks of his composition as causing disaster to the demons and as having hailed by gods and sages. The Lord Himself composed this by Himself. The hills at Tirumāliruñcōlai are resonant with delightful music sung by the bees.[115] The commentator remarks that the Lord listened to the composition of the Āḷvār and became very much delighted and sets the surroundings in the hills resound with the preliminary representation of the musical melody of the song which is generally done with the use of the letters '*ta*' and '*na*'. This is done through the humming of the bees. The Lord's composing of this *Tiruvāymoḷi* is like His own descent, causes destruction to the evil-doers and protects the good persons. This reveals that the Lord is the embodiment of supreme bliss. The composition itself is a gift of perfect knowledge to humanity. This is, unlike the *Vedas*, within the easy reach of all and successfully representing God's greatness in full. The reference to the sages getting delight through this composition shows that they contemplate on His Feet. It shows also that this composition would serve the purpose for enjoyment of God-realization and as such the sages could be taken to mean the eternal selves. As the Lord

---

109. *Pāllāṇṭu*. 5.
110. *Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai* on 2.7: 1.
111. ibid. on 1.10: 1; 8.7: 3; 10.6: 1.
112. Vide: *Īṭu* on T.V.M. 8.10: 9.
113. *Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai* on T.V.M. 8.10. 9.
114. ibid. 9.8: 1.
115. *Arāyirap-paṭi* on ibid.

followed without trying to make a reference to the *vyūha* doctrine. Services through the body, mind and word are said to be conveyed by the verses 2.9: 1 to 3. The meaning of the *Dvaya-mantra* is said to be conveyed in the verse 6.10: 10.[120] This commentary refers to the differences in the readings of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Ārāyirap-pāṭi*.[121] There is also reference to some previous gloss by a writer whose name is not mentioned.[122] Besides this commentary, this author had also written a gloss on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, explaining each verse word by word and offering informatory explanation wherever necessary.[123] But for a solitary reference to a tradition involving Rāmānuja's explanation, the commentary is free from anecdotes and presents a faithful explanation for a critical understanding of both the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Ārāyirap-paṭi*. Attempt is thus made to make the text of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* understood and there is presented a criticism on the verses directly and then the exposition follows on the *Ārāyirap-paṭi*.

Vedānta Deśika presents a critical epitome of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* in one hundred and thirty-three verses in Sanskrit of which the first ten are introductory and the last twelve offer concluding remarks, the remaining ones giving a gist of each decad in the *śāstraic* fashion. The *Tiruvāymoḷi* is a treatise on *mokṣa* and has the sentiment of quietitude as the dominating element.[124] This work was written by Vedānta Deśika at the request of scholars. What is best as the gem in the ocean of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is taken out by churning the *Upaniṣad* of Nammāḻvār.[125] Bridal mystic element is dominant in this composition and in a composition of this mystic

---

120. For similar expositions vide *Twenty-four Thousand* on *Ārāyirap-paṭi* on T.V.M. 1.3: 7; 2.6: 1; 4.1: 1; 4.3: 2; 4.8: 4; 4.10: 1; 5.3: 1; 6.2: 1; 8.9: 1.

121. Vide: ibid. on 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 1.6: 1; 1.7: 6; 4.9: 10.

122. Vide: ibid. on 1.6: 2.

123. Vide: the gloss by Vedānta Rāmānujasvāmin on T.V.M. 4.5: 1; 7.5: 5.

124. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali* 1.

125. ibid. 2.

saint, the messengers who are sent by the Āḷvār are only the spiritual preceptors.[126] After dwelling on the greatness of the Tamil rendering of the original Sanskrit sources,[127] the *Tiruvāymoḷi* is shown to represent the substance of the four *Vedas*.[128] The substance of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*,[129] the endearing qualities of the Lord[130] and the greatness of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*[131] are then stated. A summary of the contents of each centum is given at the end of each centum. In the concluding portion are given the contents of the four compositions of Nammāḷvār.[132] In his other work known as *Drāmidōpaniṣatsāra* Deśika summarises the contents of each centum in twenty-five verses.

Aḷakiyamaṇavāla-jīyar camposed in Sanskrit verse from a brief summary of each decad. The work goes by the name *Drāvidōpaniṣatsaṅgati*. The author's name is given at the end as Vādikeśari Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷa-jīyar who is no other than the author of *Twelve Thousand* on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. Maṇavāḷamāmunikaḷ wrote a piece called *Tiruvāamoḷi-nūṟṟantāti* summarising in Tamil verse the summary of each decad.

The gloss[133] known as *Arumpadam* by Kuṇakarampākkam Rāmānuja-jīyar is very scholarly and is explanatory of the *Īṭu*. The word '*antāti*' means a particular kind of versification. The author of the gloss remarks that what marks the end of the previous body marks the beginning of the next body.[134] This is a philosophical interpretation justifying the adoption of this mode of versification in some of the compositions of the *Nālāyiram*.

---

126. ibid. 3.
127. ibid. 4.
128. ibid. 5.
129. ibid. 6.
130. ibid. 7, 8.
131. ibid. 9. 10.
132. ibid. 126.
133 The treatment is very convincing on T.V.M. 1.9: 1, 6: 2.1: 6: 2.2 : 1; 2.3. 1: 2.6: 2 4.1: 7; 6 10: 4.
134. *Aṛumpadam* on T.V.M. 2.6: 1.

Apart from the *Tiruvāymoḻi* the other three compositions of Nammāḻvār and those of other Āḻvārs also were commented on by several writers of course all of them being posterior to Piḷḷāṉ and Nañcīyar. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai was the earliest scholar who commented on the entire four thousand verses of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*.[135] While heaping insult after insult on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śisupāla was only getting freed from sins and thus his act could be considered as recollecting God before death.[136] The Lord's name is to be uttered. Then the Lord will come to that self who utters it. Brahmā occupies the navel of Viṣṇu. Yet he does not know the greatness of the Lord. Simply by standing or being near the sea coast, one cannot have the estimate of the sea.[137] The Lord at ŚrīRaṅgam is lying facing the southern direction. The commentator remarks that the region lying to the north of Tamil Nad does not have the fortune of being popular with the singing of the hymns of the Āḻvārs. The beauty of His back is presented to such regions in order to attract the people there to ŚrīRaṅgam and make them acquainted with the songs of the Āḻvārs. This interpretation has much poetic beauty but looks rather exaggerated. There is a vast area lying to the north of ŚrīRaṅgam forming part of Tamil Nad wherein are numerous shrines whose glory was sung by many an Āḻvār. The suggestion could be admitted, if the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam had been in the lying posture facing the south. The real position happens to be that the Lord chose to face the south wherein lay the kingdom of Vibhīṣana. The Lord is the gem resting on the golden plate of Ādiśeṣa.[138]. The verse 38 of the *Tirumālai* can be treated as the *Carama-śloka* for this composition. It conveys the sense of *Dvaya-mantra*[139]. Nammāḻvār[140] gave the import of the first half of the *Dvaya-mantra* and Āṇṭāḷ[141] gave that of the

135. Some verses in *Periyal. Tm.* are lost and Maṇavāḷamāmuni commened on these.

136. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai on M.Tv. 35.

137. ibid. on M. Tv, 56.

138. ibid. on T.M. 19.

139. ibid. on T.M. 38.

140. Vide: Commentary on T.M. 38.

141. T.Pv. 29.

second half of the same *mantra*. The interpretation[142] of the word '*kōḷikkōṉ*' as the Lord of Uṛaiyūr does not seem to be justified as the author Kulacēkarāḷvār was the king of Kōḻik-kōṭu (modern Calicut) in the Kerala State while Uṛaiyūr lies near Srī Raṅgam. The Āḷvār in the guise of the bride feels the night unbearable. The commentator remarks that the Lord controls every one. By manliness, He subjugates those who are opposed to Him and those who are favourable to Him through His charming appearance.[143] The sacred rites have to be performed in order that devotion to the Lord would increase and sins would get destroyed.[144]

Vedānta Deśika commented on the *Amalaṉātipirāṉ* of Tiruppāṇāḷvār. This commentary which is known as *Muṇi-vāhanabhōga* was composed by the author for pleasing a pious soul who was then living at ŚrīRaṅgam. At the end of his commentary the commentator writes that he explained this work of the Āḷvār for the delight of a pious self (*sāttvika*). There is a difference of opinion regarding the identity of the pious self. While the fact is that there is no definite evidence for identifying this person, the *Tenkalai* school takes this person to be Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai[145]. Many such persons were the contemporaries of Deśika at ŚrīRaṅgam. If guess could have its sway the person could have been Piḷḷai Lokā-cārya.

Vedānta Deśika speaks of Tiruppāṇāḷvār as having acquired the bliss of Paramapada on earth and had the experience of that at the Feet of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam which took the shape of the ten verses beginning with the words "*amalaṉātipirāṉ*". The entire composition is described to be an exposition of *Tirumantra*. Great care and minute study of the poem exercised by the commentator explain how the Tamil poems convey the sense of the import of the *Vedas*.

---

142. Perum. Tm. 9: 11. This may perhaps be due to Uṭaiyūr being known also as Kōḻiyūr.

143. Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai on T.V.R. 12

144. ibid. on M. Tv. 12.

145. cf. Dusaṇa Nirāsa. Sri Vaiṣṇava sudarśana.

It is held that Vedānta Deśika wrote also *Maturakavi-hṛdayam*, a commentary on the piece *Kaṇṇinuṇ-ciṟuttāmpu* of Maturakaviyāḻvār but this is now lost.[146] It is also held that this commentator expounded the *Tiruvāymoḻi* in a work known as *Nigamaparimaḷa*.[147]

In the third section of his work *Upakārasaṅgraha* Deśika takes up the first verse of *Tiruviruttam* and interprets it. The Āḻvār represents to the Lord for listening to the four compositions of his, in all of which he prays for rendering service to Him. The words are individually expounded and the senses suggested to show that the entire principles of Vedānta are conveyed by this verse. The main import of this verse consists in giving expression to the sense of gratitude which the Āḻvār feels for God offering His own place to His devotees.

The *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇṭāḷ has unique popularity in having many commentaries. Attempts were made by most of these writers to interpret the verses as they convey sense and also to suggest the underlying import intended to be conveyed by Āṇṭāḷ. Raṅgarāmānujasvāmin, who wrote commentaries on the ten principal *Upaniṣads*, composed his exposition of each verse of Āṇṭāḷ in Sanskrit. The commentaries of Periya Parakālesvāmin and Raṅganāthasvāmin are very useful as they are written on the *śāstraic* lines, conveying the actual meaning of each word and discussing the sense and import of it in the context. The commentary refers to the explanations of several early exponents which were not however recorded in the form of works of these writers. The explanations of Kiṭāmpi Āccāṉ,[148] Piḷḷāṉ[149], Tirumalai Nampi,[150] Eṅkaḷāḻvāṉ[151]

146. Introduction to *Saṅkalpasūryodaya* p. 36.

147. ibid. p. 37.

148. Periya Parakālasvāmin's commentary on *Tiruppāvai*, p. 32.

149. ibid. p. 32.

150. ibid. pp. 62, 109, 169, 241.

151. ibid. p. 62.

Āḷavantār,[152] Empār,[153] and Emperumāṉār[154] have found places in it. There are also certain anecdotes referred to in the commentary.[155]

Periya Parakālasvāmin achieved distinction like Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai in commenting on all the four thousand veres of the *Nālāyiram*. Aḷakiyamaṉvāḷa-jīyar wrote a *svāpadeśa* commentary on the *Tiruppāvai* on which Nampiḷḷai is said to have commented in a work which is also called *Īṭu*. Nañcīyar's commentary on the *Tiruppaḷḷi Eḷucci* is available. *Amalaṉātipirāṉ* has a commentary by Aḷakiyamaṉavāḷap-perumāl Nāyaṉar, the younger brother of Piḷḷai Lokācaryar. Nālūr Piḷḷai the disciple of Īyuṇṇi Padmanābha, wrote commentaries on the compositions of Periyāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār.

Apart from these some other attempts were made to expound and interpret the *Tiruyāymoḷi* and one such attempt was made by a group of people who are referred to by Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai as Tamilians.[156] Perhaps, such persons depended more on the Tamil classical literature for offering their interpretations. Rejection of such interpretations perhaps shows that they did not have the traditional authority of Vaiṣṇavism for interpreting the *Tiruvāymoḷi* which had become then raised to the rank of the *Veda*. Nañcīyar took objection to such interpretations.[157] The verse 8.2: 2 means that the bride is skilful to proceed to God with a view to get something from Him but she could not get it. The Tamil scholar remarked here that what the bride means here is that the statement that God would grant what all the devotees want to get from Him is only true as far as the statement is made. It has failed to produce the effect in

152. ibid. p. 189.
153. ibid. p. 241.
154. ibid. p. 241.
155. ibid. pp. 113, 203
156. *Twenty-four Thousand* and *Thirty-six Thousand* on T.V.M. 1.6: 2; 2.1: 5; 4.6: 2; 3.9: 7, 9; 4.6: 2, 5; 4.10; 5.4: 6, 7; 5.9: 7, 7.5: 8; 7.7: 2.
157. Vide: *Twenty-four Thousand* on T.V.M. 7.7: 6.

her case.[158] In verse 9.6: 6, the Āḷvār says that Kṛṣṇa's exploits or deeds would be honest and sincere to him. The word '*cem*' means straightforward. The Tamil scholar however took this in the sense of helpful.[159]

The text of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* and the commentaries on it have become popular and are held sacred for spiritual study directly under the preceptor. This literature alone has won the enviable position of being called *Bagavad-viṣayam.* The knowledge of this brought in the name *Ubhayavedānta* for one who had already studied Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya* with commentaries on it.

During the period of the commentator Nampiḷḷai, an interesting feature began to mark the writing of the commentaries. Some of the compositions of the Āḷvārs seemed to convey an inner sense in addition to the direct one which is available at their first reading, The Āḷvār expressed his views and representations in the garb of another person. For instance the Āḷvār addresses the Lord as a bride would do to her lover, as a mother to the daughter and as a lady-friend to a lady who is in love with the man of her choice. In all such cases, there is the primary sense available for such passages. Since the Āḷvār is the person conveying his views, it cannot be admitted that he actually intends to convey this sense, since he is neither a woman in love, nor a mother or a lady-friend. There must be some other inner sense which is suggested. The commentators therefore grouped in such cases the utterances of the Āḷvār as *svāpadeśa* and *anyāpadeśa.* The former means utterance of one's own intention and the latter his own through that of another. That is, the former is conveyed by the Āḷvār himself while the latter is done through some one else. Thus there is the *svāpadeśa* commentary for the *Tiruviruttam* of Nammāḷvār by Aḷakiya maṇavāḷajīyār. Similarly, Āṇṭāḷ's *Tiruppāvai* has the outer garb of

158. *Itu* on T.V.M. 8.2: 2.

159. ibid. on T.V.M. 9.6: 6.

taking bath in the early hours of the morning and worshipping the Lord. But this is only the *anyāpadeśa* in sense for by *svāpadeśa* Āṇṭāḷ intends to gather the devotees together and render service to God in congregation.

CONCLUSION

The Āḻvārs prefer to deal with the personal aspects of the deity. The various currents of the Viṣṇu cult got reconciled in their compositions. The traditional dates of these saints are not acceptable in the face of literary, epigraphical and other evidences to the contrary. The concept of God as Śrīyaḥpati owes its development entirely to the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Bridal mysticism gives a unique stamp to the devotional aspects of the teachings of the Āḻvārs. The *Vedic* ordinances were developed into the concept of *kaiṅkarya*, and thus the cult of the Āḻvārs both retained and acquired religious sanctity. Through the paths of devotion and self-surrender God is brought close to mankind giving relief to the suffering humanity, otherwise at sea without any hope of protection. The concept of the shrines as '*pāṭal peṟṟa talaṅkaḷ*' gained supreme significance for daily visits of the devotees to offer their service. More than the spirit of doing *kaiṅkarya* the principle of offering blessings to God (*maṅgalāsasana*) become the moving force for the visit of the spiritually great to such shrines. A bold step was taken by the Āḻvārs in using the Tamil language for conveying the *Vedic* and religious truths and glorifying the deity. The devotional element reached the stage of perfection in the Āḻvārs' compositions to such a degree as to become the source for influencing the rise of many

theistic schools of Vaiṣṇavism through the length and breadth of India.

CONCLUSION

The aspects of religion and philosophy in the compositions of the Āḷvārs which are dealt with in the preceding chapters may now be reviewed with reference to some important features that characterise Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Āḷvār period. That the growth of Vaiṣṇavism at this period is mainly due to the compositions of the Āḷvārs needs no exaggeration. The chief features of this religion, though traceable to the epics and *Purāṇas* in the pre-Āḷvār period, assumed a full and orderly development as a result of the influence exerted by the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* on the leading exponents of this religion. The impact of the teachings of the Āḷvārs on the *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* school has been immense that from Yāmuna, whose works represent the earliest ones now available, the basic doctrines of the Āḷvārs' compositions got incorporated into tenets of this school of *Vedānta* as they were then handed down from earlier expositions such as Drāmiḍa, Taṅka and others. Thereafter the *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* became a pronouncedly theistic school of Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion. The synthesis of the two became complete at the hands of Rāmānuja whose followers enriched what their master had taught them, by their valuable literary contributions.

The fundamental tenets such as belief in a personal deity who is the creator and protector of the world, in the Divine Grace which alone saves the living beings from distress and in God Who becomes the object of devotion are common to many theistic religions of India and also those of foreign origin. Several streams of thought have been flowing from time immemorial. Some of them are traceable to the *Vedic* sources. Some are recorded in the epics and *Purāṇas* while others are dealt with in the *Āgamas*. There were also

versions of anecdotes and incidents in the ancient Tamil literature which were different from those recorded in the Sanskrit sources or which deviated from them. In the case of some religious beliefs of India, only one of these courses of thought formed the basis for the development of a particular faith, the other courses were availed of for support and interpretation of that faith.

The Vaiṣṇavite school of religious thought is found to have been the result of a reconciliation effected between the various currents of doctrines taken from all the sources mentioned above. 'The ideas of God as conveyed by the words '*brahman*', '*viṣṇu*'' '*nārāyaṇa*', '*vāsudeva*', and *bhagavān*' *in* these sources got coalesced to yield the concept of Godhead which on grounds of theology and philosophy proved itself to be acceptable to the exponents of this theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism. In this context, a reference is required to be made to the question of the period of the Āḷvārs. The tradition, as recorded in the *Guruparamparās*, place most of the Āḷvārs in the period ranging from 4200 B.C. to 2702 B.C.[1] Almost all these Āḷvārs refer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His exploits both as a child and as a warrior who took part in the war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas.[2] From the evidences which are available in the *Mahābhārata*, it is found that Kṛṣṇa left His mortal coil on the day when the *Kaliyuga* started.[3] This was in 3101 B.C. Poykaiyāḷvār, Pūtattāḷvār and Pēyāḷvār, Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār and Maturakaviyāḷvār lived before this date. Nammāḷvār was born on the forty-third day after *Kaliyuga* started. To suggest that the Āḷvārs could not have had direct vision of Kṛṣṇa's exploits and that they had to learn about them from the *Mahābhārata* and other source books on Kṛṣṇa's activities is sheer impudence. The incidents which are found recorded in the *Purāṇas* are mentioned and described by the Āḷvārs, as if they were eye witnesses of

1. Vide. Appendix VII.
2. cf. M. Tv. 8, 11, 18, 23, 24, 54, 83, 87; I. Tv. 10; 15, 19, 92; Mū. Tv; 28, 41, 51, 54, 92; Nan. Tv. 33, 57; Tc.V. 19. 31, 37, 38, 53, 71, 107. K.C. 1. T.V.M. 5.10; 6.4; Perum. Tm. 6, 7; Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.1, 2.9; 3.5; 3.6 etc.
3. Bhag. P. 12.2: 30.

such acts. Reason demands a critical view of this matter. In Vyāsa[4] or Parāśara[5] could predict the royal dynasties which could have come into being far later, it would not be preposterous to suggest that the Āḻvārs had a provision of the doings of Kṛṣṇa at a period posterior to theirs. But the admission of an explanation of this kind would throw chronology out of gear. An impartial study requires the recognition that certain events must precede their being made known to people. All the *Purāṇas* are attributed to Vyāsa who was at least their compiler. Vyāsa's period[6] having been contemporaneous with that of Kṛṣṇa, a considerate view about the probable date for the release of the *Purāṇas* could have been about 3042 B.C. It would be prudent to admit that about or after this date, the stories of Kṛṣṇa became well known to such an extent that those who listened to the recitation of the Āḻvārs' compositions could have ready understanding of the references to Kṛṣṇa's exploits contained in them without any need for the narration of the anecdote in the context. Admission of this explanation would not show that Kulacēkarāḻvār and Periyāḻvār were fully conversant with the stories of Kṛṣṇa, if they are admitted to have lived at a period which tradition fixes for them. It is therefore difficult to agree with these traditional dates for the Āḻvārs mentioned above. - Āṇṭāḷ, Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḻvār, Tiruppāṇāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār are stated in the *Guruparamparās* to have lived after 3000 B.C. One need not intend to subscribe to the traditional accounts of the dates mainly to affect their sacrosanctity. There are overwhelming evidences which militate against the acceptance of these traditional dates. It is idle to look down upon these evidences which are supported by linguistic, literary, epigraphical and historical

---

4. Vay, P. 2.37: 409.
5. V.P. 4.24: 34. A similar prediction is said to have made by Nārada about the descendents of Karikāl Cōḻa (Vide: *Kaliṅkattup-paraṇi*, Ch. 8).
6. Vyāsa was present when the *Mahābhārata* was practically released to the Public by way of exposition on the occasion of the sacrifice which was performed by Janamējaya. The latter's coronation took place in 3042 B.C. cf M.Bh, Adi. 49: 17.

facts.[7] Till evidences to the contrary are to be obtained, the dates between 700 and 850 A.D. appear to be acceptable.

Regarding the Godhead it must be noted that the Āḷvārs follow generally the account given in the *Purāṇas*. Either Viṣṇu is treated as the Supreme Deity amidst the hosts of gods or as one among the Trinity constituted by the other two Brahmā and Śiva and yet holding the supreme place over the other two.[8] At the same time, there are references to show that according to the Āḷvārs,[9] Viṣṇu is not merely of the form of the other deities but is superior to the Trinity composed of Brahmā, Śiva and Indra. This is in accordance with the *Upaniṣadic* passage[10] which has been of late changed in its reading to provide a room for Viṣṇu (called Hari) here in order that Viṣṇu could be on a par with the three deities Brahmā, Śiva and Indra. The earliest reading seems to have been without the word '*hari*' and receives support for its authenticity from the citation of this *Upaniṣadic* passage by Tirukkōṉēri Tāśyai in her *Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai*.[11]

Another significant contribution which the compositions of the Āḷvārs have made is that the Lord is Śrīyaḥpati[12] and not mere Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. This concept of Godhed which is referred to in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*[13] had given rise to the name '*Śrīnivāsa*' as applicable to Viṣṇu. In fact, Rāmānuja used for the first time in the field of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy the word 'śrīnivāsa' as an epithet of Brahman.[14] This name *Śrīnivāsa* has become all too common a name for the Lord at Tirumalai where He was known as the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam

7. Vide. Section III, Chapter IX of this thesis where a detailed discussion of this matter will be found.
8. T.V.M. 3:6: 2; 7.6: 4; 8.3: 9; 8.4: 6.
9. ibid. 2.2: 10; 3.1: 10; 3.6: 4; 10.10: 3; Periyal. Tm. 5.3: 6.
10. Nārāyaṇa Up. 13.
11. On T.V.M. 9.3: 2.
12. M.Tv. 67; I.Tv. 52; Mū. Tv. 16; Nan. Tv. 53; Peri. Tm. 4.5: 5.
13. V.P. 1.18: 17 and 35.
14. *Śrī Bhāṣya, maṅgaḷaśloka* 1.

before the period of Rāmānuja. The Āḷvārs refer to Him as *'Tirumāl'*,[15] *'Tiruvāḷmārpan'*[16] etc.

Bridal mysticism is a remarkable trait enlivening the devotional spirit of the Āḷvārs. The relation of the bride and lover (*nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva*) which subsists between a devotee and God is nothing new to the writers of lyrics of the religious type. But it appears that before the period of the Āḷvārs this aspect of devotion did not get the treatment which it should have had. The sublimation of the love of men for women and *vice versa*, complete removal of carnality from the domain of sexual references and man transforming himself into a woman for purposes of devotional love are the marks that characterise the poems of the Āḷvārs[17] as some of the outstanding devotional lyrics, perhaps the only ones of its kind to influence the writing of similar lyrics in other languages during the post-Rāmānuja period. It is true that *'Akam'* type of poetry exerted some influence on the Āḷvārs, but the contribution of the Āḷvārs to this kind of poetry and the various modes adopted by them to express the surging love according to the occasions and situations are so unique and charming that it seems as though the Āḷvārs had themselves invented this mode of treating divine love. There were poets in a large number who had successfully delineated this love on the material plane. They would not have felt any difficulty to depict this love, as they were dealing with love with which both the writes and readers or spectators as the case may be were quite familiar. On the other hand, the Divine Person, with no trace of blemish of any kind, presents Himself enchantingly to the Āḷvār who was much aware of carnality like any other mortal but who has to banish it and at the same time not speak in a language that is foreign to erotic love. To transform himself into a woman at the mental level and have the lust aroused and controlled puri-

---

15. M.Tv. 8, 64; I.Tv. 30, 32; Mu. Tv. 30, 93; P. Tv. 10, 69 etc.

16 Peri. Tm. 7.6: 3.

17. cf. I feel a creeping sense come over me
when I utter the name of my beloved.
I feel a delicate movement
running through my skin and bones
–*Love of God*, p.6.

fying it of carnality is something which lies beyond the ability of even a scholar who is endowed with much discretion. The Āḻvārs, however, succeeded in depicting their bridal love for the Lover, the Lord, basing it on the external stature of the Lord and the subdued but animated figure of the woman. This method of delineation has deeper moorings. The psychological aspects of the woman are then aroused in the Āḻvār's mind. They operate at the conscious level when acted upon by the handsome and bewitching beauty of the *arcā* form of the Lord. The Āḻvār then is only a bride in the physiological frame of man. He is then totally unaware of his masculinity and treats the Lord as her lord and pours out her heart to him. God-experience which is then had is presented by the Āḻvār in a language with which he is quite familiar and which could be easily understood by others.

The concept of '*maṭalūrtal*' is not known to the Sanskrit writers, but Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār speaks of the approach of the Sanskrit writers to this aspect of love-representation. The motif of '*maṭalūrtal*' is however known to Sanskrit writers as also the adventurous and courageous approach by woman to take the initiative in achieving their purpose is likewise well-known to them as shown by this Āḻvār through numerous instances from the ancient sources. '*Maṭalūrtāl*' is only a public display of one's unrequited love which could be adopted by women also. This touch of erotic element purified and sanctified by the element of devotion gives a unique stamp to the compositions of the Āḻvārs, particularly Nammāḻvār's. The method of sending a message to the Lover is also adopted by Āṇṭāḷ and Nammāḻvār adding variety to the treatment of devotion. Besides, the parental affection and endearment evidenced in the poems of Periyāḻvār and Kulacēkarāḻvār have few parallels elsewhere to outshine them.

Devotion, which is the name of one of the various aspects of affection and endearment subsisting between two persons, takes several shapes under the influence of awe and wonder, filial attachment, parental endearment, friendly affection and love of a bride for a man and *vice-versa*. The literature before the period of the Āḻvārs contains a vivid de-

piction of all these features of devotion. The compositions of the Āḷvārs also depict all these but they have outshone the earlier sources by the singularly superb treatment given in them of the filial, parental and bridal features of love. Even there, the bridal one gets the delicate treatment.[18] While there is a twofold course for the flow of love, that is from the Lover to the Beloved and from the Beloved to the Lover and therefore the treatment of devotion on both these courses could be justified, most of the mystical religions preferred the devotional approach from the aspect of the bride[19]. Tenderness, charm, delicacy and such other feminine traits of love could be found in God but God is very powerful, omniscient and formidable and hence manly traits could be better associated with Him. The ulterior purpose which is sought by being in love or devoted to God is reunion of the aspirant who is the self with God. To achieve this end, the womanly approach is more suited to the self which is weak and ignorant. The manly approach, which is marked by the fatherly affection, is apt when God is treated as a son who becomes the object of all the endearment and affection of the father.[20]

The doctrine of worship (*pūja*) taking the form of *kainkarya* is not peculiar to those who adopt the path of self-surrender nor is so the concept of *śeṣātva* or service to the *ācarya* or *bhakta*. All these have been from early times the aspects of religious experience particularly that of worship which forms part of *bhakti*. In the post-Rāmānuja period of Vaiṣṇavism these aspects gained more importance as a result of the preaching of the doctrines of the Āḷvārs and come to be closely associated with the path of self-surrender. Both the Āḷvārs and Rāmānuja enjoin these practices mainly with service to God, that is worship.[21]

---

18. The Āḷvārs' treatment of these features might have served as a source of inspiration and of the best models to adapt them for the treatment of these features and few others, by Bārathi in his poem '*Kaṇṇaṉ Paṭṭu*'.
19. cf. *Love of God*.
20. Perum. Tm. 9.
21. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.3: 2; Ramanuja: *Śaraṇāgatigadya*-last varse.

It would have been preposterous, if the Āḻvārs had decried openly the performance of the sacred rites which are enjoined by the *Vedas* and *Kalpasūtras*. A clever way of reconciling the performance of the *Vedic* rites with the duties which a devotee could discharge to his deity was envisaged in the *Purāṇas* and epics. It was in the *Bhagavad-gita* that statements are found enjoining the performance of the duties without the entertainment of the desire to get the rewards of them.[22] According to the *Purāṇas* an act of devotion came to be viewed as a religious rite (*karma*) which could conveniently take the place of *Vedic* rite.[23] The *Gītā* idea of renouncing the result of the acts gets promoted when it is considered that God being supreme, there is no need for the doer to saddle himself with the responsibility of getting the results of his deeds. So any act of devotion came to be looked upon as *śevā* or *kaiṅkaryā* to the Lord, which was to be done to please Him Who would surely bestow on his devotee the fruit of it according to His own liking. Moreover, the *Vedic* deity remains invisible when invoked on occasions of the ritualistic performances and so there will always be the apprehension regarding the getting of the result when the offering is not made personally to the deity. Here, however, there is God Himself in *arcā* form whom it is easy to propitiate in his very presence. This idea of service involves also the relation of master and servant between God and man. Fully alive to the limitations imposed on him and being concious of his forlornness and incapacity to do anything by himself, the devotee chooses to do what the Lord bids him to do. He is ever ready to be the servant of God and this is the purpose and goal of life.[24] This service is known as *kaiṅkarya* or *aṭimai* to do which even other gods feel the sense of rivary and competition. The spirit of service could be further extended to the devotees of God who are to be served by another devotee. In

22. Bh. G. 18 : 2.

23. Kūr. P. 2. 18

24. cf "The urge of life is to serve Thee alone,
For the God. Conscious a moment without
Thee is verily a sin".
—*Love of God*. p. 126.

a sense, this attitude seeks to eliminate the rather wide gap that separates man from man socially and also materially.

Kaiṅkarya or rendering service to the deity in a shrine has become the chief trait that governs the life of a Vaiṣṇavite. The development of this trait has been there even before the period of the Āḻvārs in some form. It was definitely in relation to the life of an individual who is devoted to his Lord. It is the compositions of the Āḻvārs that gave a definite shape to this concept in favour of rendering service to the deity in a shrine. The words '*neṭumāṟku aṭimai*'[25] show that service is to be rendered to Viṣṇu. That service is to be rendered to the Lord at the Tirumalai Hills is actually mentioned by Nammāḻvār[26] This makes it clear that the *arcā* form is to be preferred for rendering service. This explains why Rāmānuja refers to himself as having been directed by the Lord at ŚrīRaṅgam to stay there comfortably.[27] References to the Yādavādri[28] and others also support this interpretation of worship. Again, this explains why Yāmuna was taken to Śrī Raṅgam by Maṇakkāl Nampi, Rāmānuja and Tirumalai Nampi rendered service at Kāñci and Tirumalai respectively, Rāmānuja had his pontifical seat at ŚrīRaṅgam, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavāḷamāmuni spent most of their time at Śrī Raṅgam. It is in the light of this concept of *kaiṅkarya* that gave rise to the institution of group of enlightened people as Ācārya Puruṣas for rendering service in the temples and of persons well trained in the *Vedas* and *Prabandhams* as part of their *kaiṅkarya* in such shrines. In and around each shrine, there arose a band of workers who included the priests, cooks, pipers and others, all of them having, for their life's purpose, only service to the Lord. This principle for rendering service came to be applied to the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas in places where pontfical seats are establisaed and also in the houses where the Ācāryas dwell. The development and prevalence of this concept, as practised, is undeniably due to the Āḻvārs' compositions.

25. T.V.M: 8.10: 1.
26. ibid. 3.3.
27. *Śaraṇāgatigadya*,
28. G.P. p. 190.

The *bhāgavata* cult which has been in existence from very early times, even before the period of the Āḻvārs, got a fillip under the inspiration of the teachings of the Āḻvārs. The basis for this attitude is not difficult to explain. Since God is dear to the devotee, God's men too should be equally dear. They owe respect at the hand of the devotee being related through devotion to God Whom they worship If God could not be offended on moral grounds, God's men too ought not to be offended. *Bhakti*, as the path of salvation, is a moving force for bringing God's men for congregational prayers [29]

Whether the Āḻvārs used the word '*avā*', '*kātal*' or '*aṉpu*', it is very clear that they were much drawn to the Supreme Person by the spirit of devotion.[30] It is true that they frequently refer to this path and speak of the act of meditation[31] as a sure method of God-realization. Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār did adopt this means. However, the Āḻvārs do not appear to have been in favour of practising devotion in all its eight limbs.[32] Control of the sense-organs[33] relying upon God as the sole refuge and doing service to God through thought, word and deed appear to have been preached by the Āḻvārs. Though these could not be held to form part of path of devotion as preached by the *Upaniṣads* through the *Brahmā-vidyas,* they are yet part of the act of devotion which any soul could adopt when it is aroused to God's presence and gets attracted to Him. This attraction interprets effectively that the bond connecting that soul and God is nothing but the bond of devotion.

The path of self-surrender which is treated as an independent means of *mokṣa* and which preserves the essential features of *bhakti*, is well expounded in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*

29 cf. "I pray for Thy Love and for the Love of Him who loves Thee" – *Love of God*, p. 20.

30. Section IV, Chapter XVIII of this thesis deals with this matter.

31. Nāṉ. Tv. 61; Mu. Tv. 79.

32. Peri. Tm. 3.2; Nāṉ. Tv. 13.

33. cf. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 9.

and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The words used in this connection are '*nyāsa*' which means placing one's burden at the Feet of the Lord, '*prapatti*' conveyed by the verbal forms such as '*prapādye*' which really means proceeding and going and '*saraṇa*' which means house and protector. Entrusting something to another or keeping it as a deposit is the general sense conveyed by the words '*nyāsa*' and '*nikṣepa*'. Any one who requires protection or safety from some source of insecurity would naturally proceed to a place of refuge (*saraṇam*) or seek refuge under a protector (*saraṇam*). Though the *Bhagavad-gītā*[34] contains references to these words, it is only the *Carama-śloka*[35] that could be held to convey the idea of *prapatti*. It is highly difficult to aver that the *Bhagavad-gītā* preaches primarily the path of *prapatti*. In fact, it preaches the path of *bhakti* in clear terms.[36] The *Carama-śloka* could as well be taken to imply the position of *prapatti* within the framework of *bhakti*. The verse of Nammāḷvār means that the Āḷvār had sought shelter under the Feet of the Lord of Tiruvēṅkaṭam.[37] This is a clear proof that *prapatti* was adopted as the means by the Āḷvār and so he is declared to be at the head of all people who seek shelter under God (*prapanna janakūṭastha*). The traditional interpretation of this doctrine through the *Carama-śloka* and the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḷvār was handed down to Rāmānuja by Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ. In this context, it is necessary to refer to a criticism on the interpretation of the second decad of the first centum of the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. According to a line of interpretation, Yāmuna interpreted this decad as conveying the essence of *prapatti*. Rāmānuja too held this view before he wrote the *Śrī Bhāṣya*, but after writing it, he was in favour of *bhakti* as the import of this decad. Nañcīyar and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai adopt this line and the latter writer mentions Empār as having given his assent to this interpretation.[38] Curiously enough, Piḷḷāṉ, the spiritual son of Rāmānuja and the first commentator of *Tiruvāymoḻi* which he

34. Bh. G. 4: 11; 8: 20.
35. ibid. 18: 66.
36. ibid. 9 and 18.
37. T.V.M. 6.10.
38. *Thirty-six Thousand* on T.V.M. 1.2.

interpreted according to the instruction of Rāmānuja, mentions *prapatti* (*bhāra-nyāsa*) as the import.[39] This is very delicate point on which criticism could not be offered except with great caution.

The second decad of the first centum begins thus: "Renounce all things. After doing so, you offer your souls to Him Who is the master of *mokṣa*".[40] The Āḻvār then asks the selves to give up all thoughts of *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra* (the feelings of '*I*' and '*Mine*') and to have no connection with the world.[41] The entire existence is under His control.[42] All the activities, mental, verbal and physical, should be directed towards Him for His service.[43] His Feet which are the only support of the selves should be held firmly.[44] Giving up the ideas of possession and egoism and reaching or holding to the Feet of the Lord are acts which could be practised also by those who are devoted to God and who adopt the path of devotion. The doctrine of self-surrender has, for its fundamental concept and trait, the placing of one's own self at God, Who is the refuge. The basis for this act of self-surrender lies in the realization by the self that it cannot take care of itself and that God alone, Who is its master, can give protection. These are conveyed by words such as 'I reach or proceed to shelter' (*śaraṇam prapādye*). The line[45] 'offer your selves unto Him' is a clear indication of the act of self-surrender which the Āḻvār asks people to adopt. The other contingent aspects of this doctrine are clearly conveyed in this decad. In a similar strain, the Āḻvār mentions his act of self-surrender in another line: 'I do not have any refuge. I take refuge under Thy Feet'.[46] The word *'aṭiyēṉ* is used significantly conveying the sense that he is a servant of Him Who is the Lord of the three worlds and Who governs them.

39. Piḷḷāṉ on T.V.M. 1.2: 1.
40. T.V.M. 1.2: 1.
41. ibid. 1.2: 3.
42. ibid. 1.2: 7.
43. ibid. 1.2: 8.
44. ibid. 1.2: 10.
45. ibid. 1.2: 1.
46. ibid. 6.10: 10.

Apart from references contained in the contemporaries of Nañciyar and others to the effect that Rāmānuja revised his opinion regarding the import of this decad in favour of the path of devotion, what remains inexplicable is the motive for this revision of opinion. It is true that there are far more numerous evidences in favour of the path of devotion than for the path of self-surrender. If Rāmānuja felt that *Vedānta* doctrines preach and uphold the path of devotion, it must be admitted that there is justification for it. This must have been Rāmānuja's view while commenting on the *Brahma-sūtras* in the *ŚrīBhāṣya*. According to the *Gupuparamparā*, Rāmānuja was taught by Tirumālaiyāṇṭāṉ that the import of the second decad of the first centum of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* was in favour of adopting the path of self-surrender. This was the traditional view handed down from Yāmuna. As far as his discourses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* were concerned, Rāmānuja should have taught his disciples only the doctrine of *prapatti* as the import of this decad. When he directed his disciple Piḷḷāṉ to write a commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, he must have had confidence that Piḷḷāṉ would be writing in accordance with what he was taught by him. Rāmānuja did approve of this commentary *Ārāyirap-paṭi* and commanded his disciples to look upon Piḷḷāṉ as the master of both *Vedāntas*.[47] If Piḷḷāṉ's mentioning *prapatti* as the import of this decad were not traditionally correct or were contrary to his own opinion, Rāmānuja would not have given recognition to this commentary or would have at least forced Piḷḷāṉ to change the version in favour of *bhakti*. What really could have happened seems to be an incorrect understanding of the situation. That the *Tiruvāymoḷi* preferred to enjoin the path of self-surrender is to be admitted without reservation, but it would be presumptuous on the part of Rāmānuja to attribute this concept directly to the *Vedānta* tradition as propounded by the *Brahma-sūtras* and *Upaniṣads*, particularly when he strained every nerve to advocate in favour of the doctrine of devotion being not in any way different from that of knowledge. The traditions in the two *Vedāntas* were thus slightly different. Piḷḷāṉ had given thus the import of the decad as it was taught by Rāmānuja.

---

47. *Yatirāja-vaibhavam*, 108.

He must have been fully aware of the difference in Rāmānuja's approach. Whether Empār held a converse view as stated by Nañcīyar cannot be verified. The difference in the two approaches was not probably realised. Nañcīyar mentions that the import of the decad is in favour of devotion and also attributes this view to Rāmānuja and Empār intending to cite them for his support. Besides, Nañcīyar and his followers could not also explain what made Rāmānuja revise his opinion and thus made him preach against the tradition handed down to him from Yāmuna. In fact, there is no contradiction between the import of this decad and the contents of the *Śrī Bhāṣya*. From this it does not follow that Nañcīyar and his followers were against the spirit of the preachings of the Āḷvārs. That the Āḷvārs taught the path of self-surrender as the only means of salvation is readily admitted by both the lines of teachers who trace their descent from Rāmānuja.

It is really interesting in this context to note that Rāmanuja did not anywhere in his works mention that *prapatti* is an independent means of *mokṣa*. He makes references frequently to the path of devotion. In one context[48] he mentions that the act of self-surrender is the means to win God over to the side of the devotees. It is not stated here that it is the direct means of *mokṣa*. However, the *Gadya-traya* and the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* in particular, show that Rāmānuja adopted *prapatti* as the means. Similarly it could be said, of course with some reservation, that the Āḷvārs preached mainly *bhakti* as the method of reaching God but referred to *prapatti* far more frequently than Rāmānuja did in his works. What Rāmānuja taught through his works and practice became incorporated in the commentary of Piḷḷāṉ. The *ubhaya-vedānta* concept to which Āndhrapūrṇa[49] refers in a way should have formed the main tenet of the Vaiṣṇavite school from the time of Piḷḷāṉ with the result that *prapatti* assumed more significance than before. After this period, it came to be treated as an independent means. Objections should have been raised

48. *Śrī Bhāṣya* on 1.4: 1.
49. *Yatirāja-vaibhavam*, 1.

for this status offered to *prapatti*, as it is known from the *Nikṣāparakṣā* which was written by Vedānta Deśika to vindicate the validity of the doctrine of *prapatti*.

If the Āḻvārs make frequent references to the path of self-surrender, it may be taken that it is devotion that made them seek refuge when they were forlorn unable to bear the sufferings of separation from Him. These sufferings prove only that it is devotion which the soul has for God that makes it feel the separation from Him keen and making it miserable. The helpless self can do nothing to overcome it. The only thing which it can do is to seek shelter under God. In this sense alone, the Āḻvārs seem to have used the words *'tiruvaṭi aṭaital'*.[50] There is nothing wrong if this is taken to mean the doctrine of self-surrender which is supported by devotion. To suggest that the Āḻvārs had their *prapatti* as the only method, giving up or without reference to devotion is too much straining the issue. Thus devotion seems to have entered into the doctrine of self-surrender at least as its main ingredient. It is only then that the concept of *bhāgavata* worship could be explained as meaningful.

The principle of *Arthapañcaka* may also apply to the path of devotion, although the later writers adopt it in support of the path of *prapatti*. Some of the exponents in the post-Rāmānuja period apply this principle to the *Tiruvāymoḻi* and seek to show that this work of Nammāḻvār is in reality an exposition of this principle.[51]

In the state of release a liberated soul could choose any one pattern of existence such as identity of abode (*sālokya*), proximity (*sāmipya*), similarity of form (*sārūpya*) and intimate union (*sāyujya*) and can enjoy all the perfections of Vaikuṇṭha. To have the appearance of the Lord and to be ever near Him are to be desired by a self. Immense delight could be derived by these states. However, the Āḻvārs preferred to have only *sāyuja*, that is, close communion, a state which need not be

50. T.V.M. 6 10. 1, 3; 9.10: 6.
51. *Twelve-Thousand* – Introduction.

distributed thereafter. Feeling of oneness with God and the awareness that he is part of Him would give greater delight to the self who adopts the *sāyujya* aspect of existence.

The temples which were already reputed during the period of the Āḷvārs were visited by these saints who sang in praise of the deities there.[53] While Nammāḷvār sang for the most part of the shrines situated in the Tirunelveli District and the Southern part of the Kerala State, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār sang in particular the deities in and around his native place in Tirunakari in the Thañjavūr District not to speak of the innumerable shrines in the whole of India which he alone visited. But for these two Āḷvārs, most of the shrines would have passed into obscurity. Tiruvaraṅkam, Tirumalai and Tirumāliruñcōlai are the three important shrines which were popular at the time of the Āḷvārs and were visited by most among them. Subsequent to the period of the Āḷvārs and probably after Nāthamuni's arragement for the recitation of the compositions of the Āḷvārs, a shrine in whose honour an Āḷvār composed at least a verse came to be held in greater respect in comparison to the one which did not receive such an attention from the Āḷvārs. Such shrines came to be designated as '*pāṭal peṟṟa talaṅkaḷ*' (shrines celebrated by the hymns of the Āḷvārs). One hundred and eight holy shrines are brought under this head.[54] It is quite possible that Nāthamuni was responsible for the formulation of this Idea of treating a shrine as '*pāṭal peṟṟa talam*' although there is no means of verifying it. This suggestion could be admitted in view of the fact that Śrī Raṅgam became the seat of the Vaiṣṇavite Acāryas since his time. It is perhaps during the period of Rāmānuja that the important shrines got enumerated in the order of Śrī Raṅgam, Tirumalai and Kāñcīpuram. The

52. *Jitānte Śtotra* 2: 36.

53. Appendix V gives the list of shrines exclusively sung by one Āḷvār only.

54. The list of such shrines start with Śrī Raṅgam and end with Paramapadam. They are grouped according to the regions where they are situated. (Vide the list contained in Sri P. Krishnamācharyar's edition). cf. *Nūṟṟettut-tiruppati Antāti of* Piḷḷaip-perumāḷ Ayyengar.

first one is also known simply as *kōyil* and its presence at the head should have been due to the largest number of verses sung by the Āḷvārs on the presiding deity there. The Tirumalai comes next. Kāñcipuram is also known as Perumāḷkōyil in order to distinguish it from the Śiva Kāñci, with its innumerable temples of Śiva. How Kāñci or Perumāḷkōyil came to occupy the third place is not known. According to the general understanding, the temple at Tirukkacci has only two verses from Pūtattāḷvār.[55] Nammāḷvār who mentions only the three shrines Tiruvaraṅkam,[56] Tirumalai[57] and Tiruvehkā (at Kāñci),[58] did not take note of this temple. To some scholars the first decad of the first centum of Nammāḷvar's *Tiruvāymoḷi* is in honour of the deity at Tirukkacci.[59] This contention is perhaps intended to justify the mentioning of Tirukkacci or Perumāḷkōyil as the third in the list. The shrine at Melkote known as Yādavādri in the Karnaṭaka State grew in importance after Rāmānuja and is generally enumerated as the fourth shrine after Perumāḷkōyil. There are of course temples as in Mannārgudi, Maturāntakam, Śrīmuṣṇam and other places which are important in their own way, but are not known by the designation '*pāṭal peṟṟa talaṅkaḷ*'.

It was Rāmānuja that created a new kind of atmosphere in and around the temple where the Āḷvārs and the singing of their compositions came to attain much importance. This was done in the first instance at Śrī Raṅgam and was perhaps adopted by others in other shrines. The recitation of the whole or part of *Nālāyiram* has become obligatory in all shrines dedicated to Viṣṇu and situated at least in the Tamil Nadu and at Tirumalai, Ahōbilam, Badrācalam, Nellore, Maṅgalagiri and others in the Andhra State and also at Yādavādri at Melkote and other places in the Karnataka State.

55. I Tv. 95 96. The word 'kacci' is taken to refer to only this shrine. cf. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* p. 286. (Ed.) by Mayilai Mātava Tāśan (Madras. 1962).

56. T.V.R. 28.

57. ibid. 8, 10.

58. ibid. 26.

59. Vide: Candragiri Venkatesa's commentary on Vedānta Deśikā's *Drāmidopaniṣat-sāram* verse, 5.

The act of *maṅgalāsāsanam* (celebration by hymns) which the Āḻvārs performed is in reality not exactly a prayer in a plaintive tone for the redressal of personal or human misery in general. Nor is it a glowing description of God's grandeur which very often defies expression. It is not also the narration of anecdotes or episodes which recount His exploits. The word '*maṅgalāsāsanam*' means hoping or wishing well, welfare or auspiciousncss to another. Periyāḻvār stands at the head of those who could do this form of prayer. When he was taken on the elephant through the streets of Madurai, there appeared the Lord before him. He did not at once begin to praise Him, but wished that the Lord's presence should continue to flourish for hundred of years. He wishes at first that there shall be no separation between God and His devotees. The true spirit of an ideal religion or religious experience cannot be anything other than this aspect. What has happened is reunion with or coming together of God and His men. This is the ideal of religious experience. This communion shall never get disbanded. The prayer is therefore an ideal. Then the Āḻvār wishes for the welfare of Lakṣmī discus and conch, all of which show that the most Supreme Person shall have this *maṅgalasāsanam*:[60] Other Āḻvārs also do this.[61]

Another factor that must be noted is that elders talk of doing *maṅgalāsāsanam* while they go to offer worship in the shrines. They do not go to fulfil any vow or observance as most of the shrine-goers do nowadays as in the case of Tirumalai, Shōḻiṅgar (Coḻasimhapuram) and others. The real spirit underlying these could be easily guessed. The sight of the Lord in a particular pose is extremely exhilarating. The Āḻvārs do not become haughty that they alone deserve to have that sight. They wonder as to how they alone were chosen and offer an explanation for this on the ground that their good deeds done in the past should have brought God's person before them. Such a sight they wish to last for all times un-

60. *Pallāṇṭu*
61. Periyal. Tm 1.9: 5; TVM. 7.6: 11

tainted by worldly defects. Āṇṭāḷ remarks exquisitely that each limb, foot etc., of God deserves the *mangalāsāsanam*.[62] The Lord Who has come down shall remain for the welfare of humanity.

A very bold step, which is never known in any religion, was taken only in Vaiṣṇavism and that is, rendering the principles of theistic faith which is found fully developed in the ancient sources into Tamil, a language which like the languages other than Sanskrit, was not envisaged to become as vehicle for conveying religious ideas. The entire matter that could be gathered from the sources down from the *Vedas* is retained in toto in these Tamil *Prabandhams*, as though testifying to their inheritance to the *Vedic* religion. The compositions of the Āḻvārs are not translations of the *Vedas* or *Purāṇās* nor are they the Tamil renderings of portions of the *Vedic* texts or anecdotes recorded in them. They are in the literal sense of the word representations of what could be described as the sum and substance of the theistic teachings available in the Sanskrit sources.

It was Vedānta Deśika that offered a convincing justification for the adoption of the Tamil language for purposes of religious and philosophical preachings. The essence of what is taught in the *Vedas* is presented by the Lord Himself through a language which all the inhabitants of the region occupied by Sage Agastya could easily adopt and understand.[63] The substance of the *Vedānta* is more easily grasped when it is presented in the medium of Tamil.[64] Both the Āḻvār's presentation of the *Vadic* truths and principles and Vedānta Deśika's support of this adoption could be taken as presaging the present day trend of adopting the regional or mother-tongue as a medium better suited for the purpose of learning. This is indeed a democratic element in the religious and philosophic sphere.

---

62. T. Pv. 24.
63. *Guruparamparāsāra*. p. 3.
64. *Seventeen Cillaṛai Rahaśyaṅgal*, p. 3.

The objections which were noted by Nañcīyar and others regarding the adoption of a profane language for religious and devotional purposes, show that the reception which was accorded to the *Divya Prabandham* was not uniformly a favourable one. It is to build up a strong defence that Nāṭhamuni, Yāmuna and Rāmānuja sought to raise the compositions of the Āḻvārs to the status of a religious text. These compositions, at the time when Piḷḷāṉ was directed by Rāmānuja to comment upon, were held to be sacred like the *Vedas*, in spite of the non-Sanskrit language in which they were composed. The followers of Rāmānuja maintained by all means at their disposal the holy nature of these compositions and went to the extent of arranging for the recitations of these both in temples and houses on occasions of worship. Not only did Vedānta Deśika defend[65] and establish the obligatory recitation of these on the festive occasions in front of the deity but also recorded in a suggestive manner to the respect one should show for their reciters [66] Perhaps it was about this period that the *Āgamas* recommended the recitations of these hymns in praise of God composed in '*bhāṣa*', a word which then meant a language other than Sanskrit.[67]

The Lord Himself is described to have been come down in descent for the sake of humanity. While He took ten main *avatārās* under the vibhava kind, He came down in a new kind of ten *avatārās*.[68] Vedānta Deśika, who made this statement, sought to establish that the composers of the *Nālāyiram* were men of no mean merit. They were master-minds that came down with divine elements. This may perhaps point to a tradition which Vedānta Deśika was aware of during his time,

---

65. He took part in disputes with those who did not agree upon this and came out victorious and established the practice of reciting the *Prabandhams* on strong grounds (Vide : Introduction to the *Saṅkalpasūryodaya*. Part I. p.63).
66. R.T.S. Chap. I, Introductory verse. 2.
67. Is. S. 11 : 36, 37; 13: 246.
68. *Guruparamparāsāra*, p. 3. There are actually twelve composers. Āṇṭāḷ is treated as part of Periyāḻvār and Maturakaviyāḻvār as part of Nammāḻvār.

or even if he should take credit for this description, there is justification for the worship of the Āḷvārs in temples and conducting festivals to them as are done for God. While God came down and displayed His greatness to His men who expressed their love, gratitude and admiration for His exploits, here the Āḷvārs did make notable achievement in glorifying God and God alone, Maturakaviyāḷvār being an exception worthy of note. If God came down to satisfy the God-hunger of men, the Āḷvārs demonstrated through their compositions what God-hunger is. Men of ordinary abilities could not achieve this and therefore is the suggestion that is made here that God himself came down in the form of the Āḷvārs to achieve this purpose. In fact, even God cannot do this by Himself. He could do it only in the garb of His men who are endowed with His divinity for which purpose He had to come down as the Āḷvārs.

In this connection, Vedānta Deśika offers an apt analogy.[69] The salty waters of the sea are taken in by the clouds and are released as pure water which is fit to be drunk. Even so, the contents of the *Vedas* are beyond the understanding of the ordinary people and therefore could not be realized through the direct study of the *Vedas*. The Āḷvārs, like the clouds, grasped the *Vedic* doctrines, and conveyed them through Tamil medium which is not only sweet (palatable) but is also fit to be drunk like rain water. As it is holy to take bath in the sea on occasions of sacred days, the *Vedic* texts have to be respected for use on occasions. Like the rain water, the compositions of the Āḷvārs could be stored in reservoirs and used for various purposes. None is forbidden from using these compositions like the water which all can make free use of. The compositions of the Āḷvārs are thus readily understandable even to ordinary men. It will be no exaggeration if it is suggested here that just as the nature and good conditions of the containers like the tanks, reservoirs and pipes are responsible for keeping the water drinkable, so also, only such individuals could be taken to have grasped the truths

69. *Guruparamparāsāra*, p.3.

of these compositions by being sincere in their doings, honest in intentions and good by temperament. The unworthy in both cases are not only dependable but harmful also and therefore are fit to be discarded.

Like the *Vedānta* system which is mainly concerned with a disquisition about Brahman's nature and the means of attaining it, the compositions of the Āḷvārs reveal the interest of their authors in depicting God's perfection and their personal experience of Him. While the *Vedāntā* system seeks to demonstrate that Brahman's eminence could not be questioned or affected, the Āḷvārs, on the other hand, seek to draw attention to their experiences which reveal beyond the shadow of doubt God's eminence. The *Vedānta-sūtras* begin with the statement that there is a keen desire to know Brahman. Existence of Brahman is an already admitted fact which requires no proof. The marks for this assumption lie in the world owing its origin, maintenance and disappearance to Brahman. This is all known from the scriptures. The Āḷvārs too treat of the Supreme Person as too well-known and thus requiring no proof to demonstrate His existence. Without exception, He is referred to as the creator of the universe which He maintains and preserves during deluges. There is of course more of the logical aspect in proving God's relationship to the world. Visualizing God everywhere in the black sea, blue cloud and others is really an experience which could not be explained away. God chooses to reveal Himself to His men through Nature. "Nature, which is the time-vesture of God and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish".[70] Metaphysical discussions have the places of their own. They dissect the ultimate Reality into parts which become abstract having no attraction for the man with God-hunger. The deeply devout man, with his unshakeable faith in God, does not need any proof for God's existence. "There is nothing more real than what comes from religion. To compare facts such as these with that comes to us in outward existence would be to trifle with the subject. The man who

---

70. Passage from Carlyle cited in the *Ideas of God*. p. 172.

demands as reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks".[71]

This kind of description of the origin of the compositions raises another important issue. The *Vedas* are admitted to be *apauruṣeya*, that is, not of human origin. The compositions of the Āḷvārs, being designated as the *Drāvida Veda*, should be considered also as *apauruṣeya*. This matter was raised by some scholars in the post-Rāmānuja period who held that these were not of human origin.[72] Such a view does not stand to reason. Whether Nammāḷvār is stated to have rendered the *Vedas* into Tamil,[73] or the compositions are given the name *Drāvida Veda*, the fact remains there that these compositions contain the essential teachings of the *Vedas*. In this respect, they are in no way different from the epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*.[74] The *Rāmāyaṇa* which is the work of a human being Vālmīki, is stated to be only an edition of the *Veda* in the form of the *Kāvya*. It is only the *Veda* of Vālmīki who refers to it as *samhitā*.[75] The *Mahābhārata* which was composed by Vyāsa in its nuclear portion is hailed as *samhitā*[76] which is open to all, irrespective of their social standing. It is also called the *Veda* of Kṛṣṇa.[77] Its author is admittedly the *avatārā* of Viṣṇu.[78] With all this both the epics are admitted to be of human origin. The *Bhagavad-gītā* which contains the quintessence of the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*, is the song of the Divine but yet is treated not as a *Veda* of no human origin but as a *smṛti*, that is which reminds us of the *Vedic* truths. The designation *Veda* which is given to the *Nālāyiram* must be taken to convey only this sense

---

71. Passage cited from Bredby's *Appearance and Reality* in the *Idea of God*. p. 449
72. Evidence is wanting to identify the person or group of persons who held this view.
73. K.C. 8.
74. cf. ibid. Sūt. 189 to 194.
75. Rām. 6. 128 : 120.
76. M.Bh. Ādi. 1: 78.
77. ibid 1:294; 62: 20.
78 Bhāg. P. 1.3 : 21.

of revealing the truths in a medium different from that of the *Vedas*. Like the epics and *Purāṇas* these are verily the supplements to the *Vedas*,[79] still retaining the names *Veda* and *samhitā*.

Mention must be made here about the work known as *Bhagavannāmasahaśram* recently prepared by Pandit V. Anantacharya and A. Srinivasaraghavan. It is based on the *Drāmidopaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali*. This work summarises the gist of each decad in a *śloka* which contains at least ten words conveying the sense of each verse in that decad. The *Tiruvāymoli*, which is considered to be dealing with the Lord's attributes is thus held to contain at least thousand qualities of the Lord. Those who composed this work took each word which deals with the gist of verse and turned it to suit the formation of a name of the Lord. So there are thousand names prepared from Vedānta Deśika's work but based on the contents of each verse of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. This is another *sahaśranāmam* for Viṣṇu like *Viṣṇusahasranāmam* which is included within the Anusāsana parva of the *Mahābhārata*.

No better tribute could be paid to Nammāḷvār and his compositions than repeating Vedānta Deśika who said of him thus : "We worship the toe of Saṭha, whose literary outpourings bearing the fragrance of Vakuḷa flowers made the *Vedas* take rest".[80] This means that the *Vedas* felt that Brahman lies beyond thought and expression.[81] The *Tiruvāymoḷi* proceeded further where the *Upaniṣads* left by dealing at great length about God and His perfection. In another context, he remarks that the utterances made by those preceptors who are the recipients of Nārāyaṇa's favour are more authentic than and superior to those of the sages even though their hearts are pure.[82] Again he emphatically asserts that it is only through the grace of Saṭhakopa that all the Vaiṣṇavites have found it

79. cf. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tatparya-ratnāvali*. 4.
80. *Yatirōjasaptati*. 4.
81. Taitt. Up. 2.
82. *Amṛtāsvādinī*, 27.

possible to bow with their heads at the Feet of the Lord, rather reach His Feet with bent heads.[83]

It may be concluded that the popularity of Vaiṣṇavism during the period of Rāmānuja has been mainly due to four features which characterized the tenets of the school. The difficult and arduous paths of *karma* and *jñāna* were replaced by the path of devotion, not that which is enjoined in the *Upaniṣads* but practical life filled with the emotion of love for God. Abstractness, rigidity, idealism and inaccessibility which mark the *Upaniṣadic* concept of God-head gave room for emotional appeal, tenderness, realistic approach and easy accessibility of God which made the course of devotion very attractive and practicable coming within the reach of common man irrespective of social status, and equipment. That God would overlook the guilt of man and would surely help in times of distress personally or through agency gives strength to the weak-minded and makes them feel much drawn and attached to him. *Prapatti* has played an important role in this respect. To seek refuge under God is welcome measure so as to be rid of the responsibility for looking after one's own interest and also others. The concept of service to God and His men is more endearing to humanity than the mere practice of devotion. The meeting together of persons who are devoted to God is welcomed with their differences rid of them and enjoy communion with God. Hereby the spirit of tolerance gets full scope for development.

It is clear that the preachings of the Āḷvārs influenced Yāmuna and Rāmānuja to develop a system of Vedāntic thought based on the *Vedas* and the *Nālāyiram*. The courses of *bhakti*, *prapatti* and the concept of *kaiṅkarya* and the cult of the *bhāgavatas* had far-reaching effect on many a religious school all through India. The *Kṛṣṇabhakti* of Nīmbārka and Vallabha owes its rich development to the devotional hymns of the Āḷvārs whose spirits were reflected in the *Gadyatraya* of Rāmānuja, *Pañcastava* of Kūrattāḷvāṉ and the *Śtotras* of Parācara Paṭṭar. Not merely did these two schools adopt *bhakti*

83. ibid. 25.

as the main course for *mukti* and for propitiation here but the emotional element of devotion brings to our mind much of what is contained in the hymns of the Āḷvārs, whose sweet and intensely sincere contributions which are outstanding and unique in their poetic and devotional content are universally acclaimed.

The practcial influence of the compositions of the Āḷvārs made itself felt on the masses of people in no small measure and played an important role during the great revival of Hinduism in the period between the fifth century and the twelfth century which spelt the end of the vogue for Buddhism and Jainism. Apart from acting as a shaping factor in the quotidian religious consiousness of the Hindu, no matter whether he be a Vaiṣṇavite or not, the general spirit and influence of the hymns of the Āḷvārs have had a deep and long lasting extra-religious effect on the sensibility and culture of the Indian people. The emotional approach, and the ready, human appeal of the hymns have through the centuries of their popular dissemination successfully educated and cultivated the modes of feeling and outlook of the people in general, besides carrying the message of *bhakti* far and near. It may not be exceptional to claim that the Āḷvārs take credit for their contribution through these hymns not only to the cause of religion but also to the enrichment of the main stream of Indian culture.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

LIST OF BRAHMA VIDYĀS

SECTION II CHAPTER VI

NOTE : The Brahma Vidyā is the name given to a particular mode of meditating on Brahman. The effect of adopting them is the same. Yet, the Vidyās are distinct from each other due to the differences in the qualities of Brahman which are due to be meditated. These are dealt with in the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma-sūtra*.

There are at least five sources providing information on them :

1. Govindacharya, A : *Rāmānuja's Bhagavadgīta-bhāṣya (Translated into English).* The appendix in this work contains information on the Brahma Vidyās. This list does not mention Ādityamaṇḍastha Satyabrahmavidyā but mentions Bhargavī Vāruṇi Vidyā.

2. Narayanaswami Iyer, K : *Brahma Vidyās.* In this work Nyāsa Vidyā is omitted. Puruṣa Vidyā and Udgītha Vidyā are mentioned separately (vide p. 127). Pandit V. Krishnamacharya examines and proves that Nyāsa Vidyā could not be denied a place in the list of Brahma Vidyās.

Vide : Descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscript in the Adyar Library, Madras. Vol. X. Introduction, p. (xv).

3. *Hastigiri Māhātmyam* of Vedānta Deśika with a Tamil commentary by M.M. Cetlūr Narasimhacharya.

4. *Adhikaraṇasārāvaḷi* of Vedānta Deśika. The introduction of this work (pp. xi–xiii) gives useful information and treats of six Vidyās which are distinct from those given here dropping some among them.

5. *Brahmasūtra Śrībhāṣya with Śrutaprakāśika Vol. II* (Ed.) T. Vīraraghavacharya, Madras, 1967. The appendix of this work enumerates 46 Brahma Vidyās.

This Appendix is based on the work No.3 *Hastigiri-māhātmyam.*

Name of the Vidyā	*Source*
1. Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad Vidyā	Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad 15, 16.
2. Paramapuruṣa Vidyā	Praśna Upaniṣad 5: 5 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 12.
3. Sad Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.2: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 5.
4. Vaiśvānara Vidyā	Chandogya Upaniṣad. 5.18: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 25; 3.3: 55.
5. Ānandamaya Vidyā	Taittirīya Upaniṣad: 5.18: 1 Ānandvalli 2.1: 1. Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 13
6. Prāṇa Vidyā	Chādogya Upaniṣad 5.1: 1. Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 10.
7. Sāṇḍilya Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 3.14: 1 Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 19.
8. Samvarga Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.3: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 33.
9. Upakosala Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.10: 5 Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 13, 15.
10. Uddālaka Antaryāmi Vidyā	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.7. 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 19-21.
11. Bhūma Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.23: 1. Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 7.
12. Dahara Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.1: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 13; 3.3: 38.
13. Gārgyakṣara Vidyā	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 3.8: 8 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 9.
14. Madhu Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.1: 1 Brahma-sūtra, 1.3: 30.
15. Bālāki Vidyā	Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad 4.18 Brahma-sūtra 1.4: 16.
16. Maitreyī Vidyā	Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5: 6 Brahma-sūtra 1.4: 19.
17. Pañcāgni Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.10:1. Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 32.

18. Ādityamaṇḍalastha Satyabrahma Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.15: 1 Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 5.5: 2 Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 20.
19. Akṣitha Satya-brahma Vidyā	Chāndogya Upan;ṣad 4.15: 1 Bṛahmadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 5.5: 2 Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 20.
20. Śrīman Nyāsa Vidyā	Taittirīya Nārāyaṇīya Upaniṣad, 79.
21. Parañjyotir Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.13: 7 Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 25.
22. Naciketa Vidyā	Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 3.2 Brahma-sūtra, 1.2: 12.
23. Akṣarapara Vidyā	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1: 5 Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 22.
24. Satyakāma Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.7: 1 Brahma-sūtra 4.4: 3.
25. Aṅguṣṭhapramita Vidyā	Katha Upaniṣad. 4.12 Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad 5: 8. Brahma-sūtra, 1.3: 23.
26. Jyotiṣam Jyotir Vidyā	Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4: 16 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 31.
27. Uṣastha Kahola Vidyā	Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.4: 2. Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 35.
28. Ākāśa Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.14: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 42.
29. Antarāditya Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 1.6: 6. Brahma-sūtra, 1.1: 21.
30. Pratardana Vidyā	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, 3.2 Brahmo-sūtra 1.1: 29.
31. Paryaṅka Vidyā	Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad 1.3.
32. Gārytrī Vidyā	Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.12: 1 Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 26.

APPENDIX II

LIST OF ĀLVĀRS MENTIONED IN SEVERAL VAIṢṆAVITE LITERATURE

(SECTION III : CHAPTER XIX)

I. Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār's List (after R.N.)

1. Poykaiyāḷvār
2. Pūtattāḷvār
3. Pēyāḷvār
4. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
5. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
6. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
7. Kulacēkarāḷvār
8. Periyāḷvār
9. Āṇṭāḷ
10. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
11. Nammāḷvār

    Nāthamuṉikal

    Yāmunācārya

    Rāmānuja

II. Parācara Paṭṭar's List (after a śloka by him)

1. Pūtattāḷvār
2. Poykaiyāḷvār
3. Peyāḷvār
4. Periyāḷvār
5. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
6. Kulacēkarāḷvār
7. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
8. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
9. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
10. Nammāḷvār

    Rāmānuja

III. Piṉpaḷakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar's List (after G.P.P.)

1. Poykaiyḷāvār
2. Pūtattāḷvār

3. Peyāḷvār
4. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
5. Nammāḷvār
6. Maturakaviyāḷvār
7. Kulacēkarāḷvār
8. Periyāḷvār
9. Āṇṭāḷ
10. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
11. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
12. Tirumaṅkaiyālvār

IV. Vedānta Desika's List (after his *Atikārasaṅkraham*)

1. Poykaiyāḷvār
2. Pūtattāḷvār
3. Pēyāḷvār
4. Nammāḷvār
5. Periyāḷvār (and Āṇṭāl)
6. Kuḷacekarāḷvār
7. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
8. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
9. Tirumḷicaiyāḷvār
10. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
11. Maturakaviyāḷvār

V. Vēdānta Dēśika's List (after his *Pirapantasāram*)

1. Poykaiyāḷvār
2. Pūtattāḷvār
3. Pēyāḷvār
4. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
5. Nammāḷvār
6. Maturakaviyāḷvār
7. Kulacekarāḷvār
8. Periyāḷvār
9. Āṇṭāḷ
10. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
11. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
12. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṉār

VI. Maṇavāḷamāmunikaḷ's List (after his Īyalcāttu)

1. Pūtattāḷvār
2. Peyāḷvār
3. Poykaiyāḷvār
4. Nammāḷvār
5. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
6. Periyāḷvār
7. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
8. Kulacēkarāḷvār
9. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
10. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
11. Āṇṭāḷ
12. Maturakaviyāḷvār

VII. List (after *Nālāyiram*)

1. Periyāḷvār
2. Āṇṭāḷ
3. Kulacēkarāḷvār
4. Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār
5. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār
6. Tiruppāṇāḷvār
7. Maturakaviyāḷvār
8. Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār
9. Nammāḷvār
10. Poykaiyāḷvār
11. Pūtattāḷvār
12. Pēyāḷvār

APPENDIX III

INCIDENTS RECORDED BY THE ĀḺVĀRS, BUT NOT FOUND IN ĪTIHĀSAS AND PURĀṆAS

(SECTION II : CHAPTER VII; SECTION III : CHAPTER XI)

1. *A reference to Rāvaṇa* (M.Tv. 45; Mu. Tv. 77; Nān. Tv. 44) : Once Rāvaṇa, hiding his ten heads, went in disguise to the four-faced Brahmā to get boons from him. Nārāyaṇa transformed Himself into a baby, pretended to be asleep in the lap of the four-faced god and counted Rāvaṇa's concealed heads with His leg thereby hinting to Brahmā the real identity of the receiver of the boons and what would result by the grant of the boons.

2. *Controlling of the seven wild bulls by Kṛṣṇa* (M. Tv. 62, 83; I.Tv. 62, 63; Mu. Tv. 25, 49, 85; Nan. Tv. 33; Perum. Tm, 2: 3; Peri. Tm. 1.2: 3; 1.4: 6; 1.10: 7; 2. 2:4; 2.9: 9; 2.10: 7; 3.4: 4; 3.8: 9; 3.10: 10; 4.4: 4; 5.1: 6; 5.9: 8; 6.5. 5; 6.10: 5; 7.7: 7; 7.8: 8; 8.6: 9; 8.9: 3; TVR. 21; TVM. 1.5: 1; 1 8: 7; 2.9: 10; 3.5: 4; 4.2: 5; 3.3: 1; 4.8: 4; 5.7: 9; 6 4: 2, 6; 7.2: 9): Kumpakaṉ, a leader of cowherds and the brother of Yacōtai had a daughter Nappiṉṉai by name born of the amsa of Nīlā. He sent a proclamation that any one who can control the seven wild bulls kept by him was eligible to marry his daughter. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before the bulls in seven forms, controlled them and won the hands of Nappiṉṉai. Of all the consorts married by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nappiṉṉai is most glorified in Tamil literature and this tradition is handed down to the Āḻvārs' poems.

3. *Kuṭākkūttu (Pot-dance) by Śri Kṛṣṇa* (I. Tv. 98; Mu. Tv. 73; Tr. V. 38; Perum. Tm. 7: 9; Peri. T.m. 2:5: 4; 3.10: 8; 5.5: 6; 9.10: 9; C.TML. Kan. 11, 12; Periyal. Tm. 2.7: 7; 2.9: 6; Nac. Tm. 3: 6; TVR. 38; P.Tv. 31; TVM 2.7: 4; 3.6: 3, 7; 4.2: 5; 4.4: 6; 8.5: 6; 10.1: 11; 10.10: 4): Kuṭakkuttu is a kind of pot-dance in which the dancer will carry a pile of pots on

his head, two pots, one on each shoulder; he will then throw pots up in the air with both the hands and receive them deftly in quick succession. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is said to have been an adept in this dance. When Pradyumna was put into prison by Bāṇāsura for having loved and secretly lived with his daughter Uṣā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa rushed to Bāṇa's capital to retrieve His grandson. This is the version of the incident recorded in the Purāṇas.[1] The Tamil Literature mentions, in addition to these doings of Kṛṣṇa, the Koṭakkūttu enacted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Bāṇa's city, Cōṇitapuram. This is explained by Aṭiyārkkunallār, the commentator of *Cilappatikāram*.[2]

4. *Story of Cīmālikan* (Periyāḷ Tm. 2.7: 8): Cīmālikan was an intimate cowherd friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He learnt the wielding of many weapons from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, became arrogant of his strength and started giving trouble to peace loving people. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was very much worried about this, called him and advised him not to do so. Cīmālikan not only did not pay heed to His advice, but also found fault with Śrī Kṛṣṇa for not teaching him how to wield the discus. Even though Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried to convince him that it would be a difficult affair, Cimalikan insisted on his learning of it. Thinking that it would be the proper time to dispose of his undesirable comrade, Śri Kṛṣṇa rotated the discus with His single finger, sent it up in the air and received it back with great deftness. Cīmālikan tried to do the same, but alas! in the process, had his head cut off his neck by the rotating discus.

5. *Rāma bound by jasmine garland* (Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.10: 2): When, once in Ayodhyā, Rāma and Sītā were spending a pleasant night, there arose a petty quarrel between them. In a sulky mood for which the reason is not known, Sītā in an endearing love-quarrel bound Rāma by means of a jasmine garland.

6. *The squirrels' part in building the dam for Rāma across the ocean* (T.M. 27) : Seeing the monkeys rolling and carry-

1. Bhāg: P. 10. 62.
2. CLP. 1: 6. ll. 54-55 (Commentary). Refer also to T.A.S. Vol. V, p. 117 for its explanation.

ing the mountains in the building of the dam across the ocean, the squirrels also desired to do their humble mite in the sacred task. They dived into the water, besmeared themselves with the sand of the ocean bed by rolling on it and came up to spill the sand on the dam.

7. *Breaking of Kurunta* tree (M. Tv. 27, 54, 62; Nan. Tv. 57; Tc. V. 37; Peri. Tm. 1.8: 1; 4;3: 8 : 5; 4.5: 4; 9.10: 8; 10.5: 4; 11.2: 1; TVM 6.4: 6; 6.6: 8; 6.8: 8). The incident alluded to by the Āḻvārs, it seems, is based on the Tamil tradition[3] according to which Kṛiṣṇa took away all the garments of the gopīs when they were taking bath in the Yamuna and climbed in a Kurunta tree to hide them. When he saw Balarāma coming on that way He thought that He would be scolded by His brother. So He bent the tree towards the river so that the gopīs could hide themselves from his sight.[4]

8. *Namuci's fate* (Periyal. Tm. 1.8: 8): When Vāmana grew into Tirivikrama and began to measure the three feet of the land got as a free gift from Bali, Bali's son, Namuci, rushed to His feet and hit at the growing feet of the Lord in order to prevent His measuring process. Namuci demanded Him to measure with the same feet He appeared in as Vāmana, because He got His gift only on that measure. The Lord argued that the physical body cannot be static but only growing and told him the impossibility of His returning to His previous form. In spite of His argument, Namuci clung to His feet firmly. So the Lord hurled him in the air.

3. AKN. 59 and old commentary.

4. For further details refer to *Ārāyccittokuti*, pp. 61 to 65.

APPENDIX IV

NAMMĀḶVĀR'S VERSES ON THE ARCĀ-FORM OF GOD

(Section IV Chapter XVI)

Place	*Decad*	*No. of verses*
Śrī Vaikuṇṭam*	T.V.M. 9.2.4.	1
Śrī Varamaṅgalam*	T.V.M. 5.7	11
Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr*	T.V.M. 8.4	11
Tirukkaṇṇapuram	T.V.M. 9.10	11
Tirukkaṭittāṉam*	T.V.M. 8.6	11
Tirukkāṭkarai*	T.V.M. 6.6	11
Tirukkōḷūr*	T.V.M. 6.7	11
Tirukkuḷantai*	T.V.M. 8.2: 4	1
Tirukkurukūr*	T.V.M. 4.10	11
Tirukkuruṅkuṭi	T.V.M. 1.10: 9 T.V.M. 3.9: 2 T.V.M. 5.5	13
Tirukkuṭantai	T.V.M. 5.8 T.V.M. 8.2: 6 T.V.M. 10.9: 7	13
Tirummāliruñcōlai	T.V.M. 2.10 T.V.M. 3.1 T.V.M. 3.2 T.V.M. 10.7 T.V.M. 10.8: 1,6	46
Tirumōkūr	T.V.M. 10.1	11
Tirumūḻikkaḷam	T.V.M. 9.7	11
Tirunāvāy	T.V.M. 9.8	11
Tiruppēreyil*	T.V.M. 7.3	11
Tiruppērnakar	T.V.M. 10.8	11
Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi*	T.V.M. 8.3: 5 T.V.M. 9.2	12
Tiruppuliyūr	T.V.M. 8.9	11
Tiruvallavāḷ	T.V.M. 5.9	11
Tiruvanantapuram*	T.V.M. 10.2	11

Tiruvaṉparicāram*	T.V.M. 8.3: 7	1
Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr*	T.V.M, 6.1	11
Tiruvaraṅkam	T.V.R. 28 T.V.M. 7.2	12
Tiruvāṟaṉvilai*	T.V.M. 7.10	11
Tiruvāṭṭāṟu*	T.V.M. 10.6	11
Tiruvehkā	T.V.R. 26	1
Tiruvēṅkaṭam	T.V.R. 8, 10, 15, 31 50, 60, 67, 81 T.V.M. 1.8: 3 2.6: 9 2.6: 10 2.7: 11 3.3 3.5: 8 3.9: 1 4.5 6.6 6.10 8.2: 1 9 3: 8 10.5: 6 10.7: 8	62
Tiruviṇṇakar	T.V.M. 6.3	11
Tolaivillimaṅkalam*	T.V.M. 6.5	11
Tuvarapati (Dvāraka)	T.V.M. 5.3: 6	1
Varakuṇamaṅkai*	T.V.M. 9.2: 4	1
Vaṭamaturai	T.V.M. 9.1	11

Total number of shrines : 33

Total number of verses : 395

NOTE : The Vaiṣṇavite traditionalists count the number of sacred shrines as 108 in which Tiruppāṟkaṭal and Paramapadam are included. However, the number available in the list of arcā forms actually celebrated by the Āḻvārs comes only to 106, Tirappāṟkaṭal and Paramapadam not being the places for arcā forms. Besides, Paramapadam represents by itself the *Para* form of Nārāyaṇa.

* Indicates the shrines celebrated only by Nammāḻvar.

APPENDIX V

List of shrines celebrated exclusively by Pūtattāḻvār, Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār, Kulacēkarāvār, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār, Periyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār.

(CHAPTER IV CHAPTER XXIV)

	Number of verses sung
Pūtattāḻvār	
Toṇṭail-nāṭu	
1. Tirukkacci(Attikiri)	1
Tirumaḻicaiyāḻvār	
Cōḻa-nāṭu	
1. Aṉpil 2. Kavittalam	1
Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār	
Cōḻa-nāṭu	
1. Arimēyaviṇṇakaram (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
2. Ātaṉūr	1
3. Compoṉceykōyil (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
4. Ciṟupuliyūr	10
5. Kāḻiccīramāviṇṇakaram	10
6. Kaṇṭiyūr	1
7. Karampaṉūr	1
8. Kāvaḷampāḍi (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
9. Kūṭalūr	10
10. Maṇimāṭakkōyil (Tirunāṉkūr)	11
11. Nantipuraviṇṇakaram (Nāthankoyil)	10
12. Pārttaṉpaḷḷi (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
13. Puḷḷampūtaṅkuṭi	10
14. Talaiccaṅkanāṇmatiyam	2
15. Tiruccerai	13
16. Tiruintaḷūr	11
17. Tirukkaṇṇaṅkuṭi	10
18. Tirukkṇṇamaṅkai	15
19. Tirumaṇikkūṭam (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
20. Tirunākai	10
21. Tirunaṟaiyūr	109
22. Tirutteṟṟiyampalam (Tirunāṅkūr)	10

23.	Tiruttēvoṉarttokai (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
24.	Tiruvaḷuntūr (Tēraḷuntūr)	45
25.	Tiruveḷḷiyaṅkuṭi	10
26.	Tiruveḷḷakkuḷam (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
27.	Uṟaiyūr	1
28.	Vaikuntaviṇṇakaram (Tirunāṅkūr)	10
29.	Vaṇpuruṭōttamam (Tirunāṅkūr)	10

Pāṇṭi-nāṭu

1.	Tirukkūṭal (Maturai)	1
2.	Tirumeyyam	10
3,	Tiruppullāṇi	21

Naṭu-nāṭu

Tiruvayintirapuram	10

Toṇṭai-nāṭu

1.	Kārakam	1
2.	Kārvāṉam	1
3.	Nilāttiṅkaḷ-tuṇṭam	1
4.	Nīrakam	1
5.	Paramēccuraviṇṇakaram	10
6.	Pavaḷavaṇṇam	1
7.	Tirukkaḷvaṉūr	1
8.	Tiruniṉṟavūr	2
9.	Tirupputkuḷi	2
10.	Tiruttaṇkā	2
11.	Tiruviṭaventai	13

Vaṭa-nāṭu

1.	Ciṅkavēḷkuṉṟam (Ahōbilam)	10
2.	Naimicāraṇyam	10
3.	Tirupiriti	10

Kulacēkarāḷvār

Malai-nāṭu

1.	Vittuvakkūṭu	10

Periyāḷvār

Vaṭa-nāṭu

1.	Kaṇṭaṅkaṭinakar (Devaprayāgai)	11

Nammāḷvār

Pāṇṭi-nāṭu

1.	Cirīvaramaṅkai	11
2.	Śrī Vaikuṇṭam	2
3.	Tirukkōḷūr	11
4.	Tirukkuḷantai (Peruṅkuḷam)	1
3.	Tirukkurukūr	11
6.	Tiruppērai (Tiruppēreyil)	11
7.	Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi	12
8.	Tolaivillimaṅkaḷam	11
9.	Varakuṇamaṅkai	1

Malai-nāṭu

1.	Tiruccеṅkuṉṟūr-ciṟṟāṟu	11
2.	Tirukkaṭittāṉam	11
3.	Tirukkāt-karai	11
4.	Tiruvaṉantapuram	11
5.	Tiruvaṇparicāram*	1
6.	Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr	11
7.	Tiruvāraṉviḷai	11
8.	Tiruvāṭṭāṟu	11

*The whole decad (T.V.M. 8.3) is the celebration of the deity at this place according to the author of *Ācārya Hṛdayam* (A.H Sūt. 173).

APPENDIX VI

LINE OF SUCCESSION OF VAIṢṆAVITE ĀCĀRYAS OF TWO SCHOOLS

(SECTION V; CHAPTER XXIX)

Nāthamuṉi (823–903 A.D.)
|
Uyyakkoṇṭār (826–931 A.D.)
|
Maṇakkāl Nampi (889–994 A.D.)
|
Āḷavantār (916–1041 A.D.)
|
Periya Nampi (997–1102 A.D.)
|
Rāmānuja (1017–1137 A.D.)

Vaṭakalai line

Tirukkurukaippirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ[1] (b. 1068 A.D.)
|
Eṅkalālvāṉ (Viṣṇucittāṉ) (b. 1108 A.D.)
|
Naṭātur Ammāḷ (Vātsya Varadācārya) (b. 1165 A.D.)
|
Kiṭāmpi Appuḷḷār[2] (Ātreya Rāmānuja) (b. 1221 A.D.)
|
Vedānta Deśika (Vēṅkaṭanātha) (1268–1369 A.D.)
|
Naiṉārāccar (b. 1316 A.D.)

Teṉkalai line

Empār[3] (b. 1025 A.D.)
|
Parācara Paṭṭar[4] (b. 1062 A.D.)
|
Nañcīyar (c. 1113 A.D.)
|
Nampiḷḷai[5] (1147–1252 A.D.)
|
Vaṭakkuttiruvītippiḷḷai[6] (Kṛṣṇapāda) (1167–1265 A.D.)
|
Piḷḷai Lōkācāryar (c. 1300 A.D.)
|
Tiruvāymoḷippiḷḷai (Śrīsailesa) (c. 1380 A.D.)
|
Maṇavāḷamāmuṉikaḷ (Varavaramuṉi) (1371–1443 A.D.)

---

1. *Satsompradāya Muktāvali*, p. 15.
2. ibid. p. 14.
3. ibid. p. 12.
4. ibid. p. 13.
5. ibid. p. 14.
6. ibid p. 14.

APPENDIX VII

DATES OF THE ĀḶVĀR

(For General Reference)

	Name of the Aḷvār	*Traditional Date*	*Date arrived at*
1.	Poykaiyālvār	Dvāpara Era 862901 (4200 B.C.)	713 A.D.
2.	Pūtattḷāvār		
3.	Pēyāḷvār		
4.	Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār	Dvāpara Era 862901 (4200 B.C.)	720 A.D.
5.	Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār	Kali Era 298 (2803 B.C.)	726 A.D.
6.	Kulcèkarāḷvār	Kali Era 28 (3073 B.C.)	767 A.D.
7.	Tiruppāṇaḷvār	Kali Era 343 (2758 B.C.)	781 A.D.
8.	Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār	Kali Era 399 (2702 B.C.)	776 A.D.
9.	Periyāḷvār	Kali Era 47 (3054 B.C.)	785 A.D.
10.	Āṇṭāḷ	Kali Era 98(3003 B.C.)	767 A.D.
11.	Nammāḷvār	Kali Era 43rd day (3101 B.C.)	798 A.D.
12.	Maturakaviyāḷvār	Dvāpara Era 863879 (3222 B.C.)	800 A.D.

APPENDIX VIII

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. TAMIL WORKS

Acharya, P. Sri *Śrī Rāmānujar* (Swadesamitran, Madras, 1964).

Acharya, P. Sri *Jñānacikaram* (Kalaimakal karyalayam, 1959).

Alakiya Manavalap-perumal Nayanar: *Ācārya Hṛdayam* (Ed.) and Tamil rendering by B.R. Purusothama Naidu (Madras University, 1965).

Amirthasakarar: *Yāpparuṅkalam*, Vols. I and II (Pavananthar Kaḷakam, Madras, 1916).

Amirthasakarar: *Yapparuṅkolak-kārikai* (Dr. U.V.S. Iyer's Library, Adyar, Madras, 20).

Annar Appaṅkār swamikal: *Palanaṭai Viḷakkam*. 1895.

Balasundara Naykkar, K: *Commentary on Tiruvāymoḷi* (Akapporuḷ verses only) Vols. I and II, (T.T.D. Publication, Tirupati, 1958).

Candracekara Kaviraja Pantitar (Ed.): *Varuṇakulātittiyaṉ Maṭal*, Madras.

Civajnana Munivar: *Amuttāmpikāi Pillai-t-tamil* (The SISSWP Society Ltd, Madras, 1956).

Duraiswamy Pillai, A.S.: *History of Tamil Literature* (7th to 10th century (Annamalai University, 1958).

Gopalakrishnamachariyar, V.M. (Ed.): *Nālaṭiyār* (Madras).

Govindaraja Mudaliyar, K.R.: *Āḻvārkaḷ Varalāru* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1950).

Govindaraja Mudaliyar, K R: *Āḻvārkaḷ Vaḻikkuravar Varalāṟu* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., 1950).

Govindaraja Mudaliar, K.R. (Ed.): *Paṉṉirupāṭṭiyal* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1949).

Govindaraja Mudaliyar, K.R. (Ed.): *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ Urai* (Pavānanthar Kaḷakam, Madras).

- *Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam* (Pavānanthar Kaḷakam, Madras).

Ilanko Aṭikal: *Cilappatikāram* (Ed.) M.M. Venkataswami Nattar with commentary, (Pakaneri, 1942).

Iḷavalakanar: *Kalittokai*, Fourth Edition, (The SISSWP Society Ltd., 1955).

Ilamurukanar (Ed.) : *Tēvāram Aṭaṅkaṉ Muṟai* (Saiva Siddhanta Samajam, Madras, 1953).

Kampan : *Kamparāmāyaṇam* Vols. 1 to IX (Murray & Co., Madras, 1958).

Kampan : *Kamparāmāyaṇam–Pālakāṇṭam* (Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer's Library, Adyar, Publication No. 8).

Konku Velir : *Peruṅkatai* (Ed.) Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, Third Edition, 1953.

Krishnaveni Ammaiyar : *Cemporuḷ* (T.T.D. Publication, Tirupati, 1952).

Krishnaveni Ammaiyar, S : *Periyāḻvār Peṇkoṭi*, Madras, 1947.

Krishna Pillai, H.A. : *Iraṭcaṇya Yāttirīkam* commented by P.S. Kadmbavana Sundara Nainar, Christian Literature Society, Madras.

Kulavanikan Cittalai Cattanar : *Maṇimēkalai* (Ed.) Dr. U.V;S. Iyer, Third Edition, 1931.

Manavalamamunikal : *Upatecaratnamālai.* (Ed.) P.B. Annangaracharya, Kanchi.

Manikkavacakar : *Tirukkōvaiyār with commentary* (Kasi Mutt, Tiruppanantal, 1952).

Manikkavacakar : *Tiruvācakam* (Ed.) P. Ramanatha Pillai (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1963).

Maraimalai Atikal : *Māṇikkavācakar Varalārum Kālamum* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1957).

Meenakshisundaram, T.P : *Cayāmil Tiruppāvai-Tiruvempāvai* (59, Paari Nilayam, Madras-1, 1961).

- *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* (P.B. Annangaracharyar's Edition, 1960): Mayilai Madavadasan's Edition, 1962; (P. Krishnamacharya swamikal's edition, Madras, 1922); C. Krishnamacharyar's second edition, 1919).

Narkaviraja Nampi : *Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1963).

Narayanaswami Iyer, P. (Ed.) : *Naṟṟiṇai* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., 1956).

– *Onpatām Tirumuṟai* (Kasi Mutt, Tirupanantal).

Pantarattar, T.V.S. : *A History of Tamil Literature* (13th, 14th and 15th centuries), First Edition (Annamalai University, 1956)

Pantarattar, T.V.S. : *The History of the Later Cōḷas* Vols. I and II, (Third Edition, Annamalai University, 1958).

Pantarattar, T.V.S. : *Pāṇṭiyar Varalāṟu*. (Kumbakonam, 1940).

Paranjoti Munivar : *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* commented by N.M. Venkaswami Nattar (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1927).

- *Patiṉōrām Tirumuṟai* (Kasi Mutt, Tiruppananal, 1950).

Pattinattar : *Paṭṭiṉāttār Pāṭalkaḷ* (A. Rajaratna Mudaliyar, 23, Tandavaraya Pillai Street, Madras, 1951).

Perumal Ramanuja Tasar : *Ācārya Vaipavam* (Madras, 1949).

Pillaip-Perumal Ayyengar : *Aṣṭaprapantam* (Murray & Co., Madras, 1957).

Poyyamolip-puavar : *Tañcaivāṇaṉ Kōvai* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1958).

Puruddotama Naīdu, B.R. : *Īṭṭin Tamilākkam* (in 10 Volumes), Madras University, 1952 to 1955.

Puttamittirar : *Vīracōḻiyam with commentary* (Ed.) Pavānantar Kaḻakam, 1942.

Raghava Ayyengar, M : *Ārāycci Tokuti*, First Edition, 1938.

Raghava Ayyengar, M. : *Āḻvārkaḷ Kālanilai* Vol. I, (Palaniyappa Brothers, Tiruchirapalli-2).

Raghava Ayyengar, M. : *Cācaṉat-tamiḻk-kavi caritam*, Second Edition, Madras, 1937.

Raghava Ayyengar, R, *Aṇṭakōḷa Meypporuḷ*. Sri Vedavedanta Vaddhani Mahasabha Triplicane, Madras 1934).

Rajamanickam, M. : *Tamiḻ Moḻi Iḷakkiya Varalāṟu* (59. Paari Nilayam, Madras, 1963).

Ramanathan, Aru : *Civavākkiyar Pāṭalkaḷ*, Madras, 1959.

Ramanujacharya, V.K. : *Tiruvāymoḻi with Tamil Gloss* Vols. I to III (Kumbakonam, 1934).

Roya Chockalingam : *Tiruveṅkaṭap-pāmālai* (Karaikudi, 1968).

Sethu pillai, R.P. : *Tiruvalluvar Nūlnayam* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1940).

Somasundara Tecikar : *Patiṉāram-nūṟṟāṇṭut-tamiḻip-pulavarkaḷ Varalāṟu*, Second Edition, Madras, 1939

Srinivasa Pillai, K.S. : *Tamiḻ Varalāṟu* Vols. I and II (Kumbakonam, 1924).

Subbu Reddiar, N. : *Tolkāppiyam Kāṭṭum Vāḻkkai*, First Edition, Palaniyappa Brothers, 14, Peters Road, Madras-14.

Subramanya Iyer, A.V.: *Tamiḻ Ārāycciyiṉ Vaḷarcci* (Amuta Nilayam Madras, 1959).

Subramanya Pillai. K.: *Tamiḻ Ilakkiya Varalāṟu* Vols. I and II, Teachers' Publishing Society, Madras-1.

Subramanya Sastry P.S.: *Caṅkanūlakalum Vaitīkacamayamum*, Tiruchi. 1951.

Swaminatha Iyer, U.V. (Ed.): *Kuṟuntokai*, (Madras, 1947).

Swaminatha Iyer, U.V. (Ed.): *Paripāṭal*, Third Edition, 1948.

Swaminatha Iyer, U.V. (Ed.): *Patiṟṟup-pattu* (Madras, 1957).

Swaminatha Iyer, U.V. (Ed.): *Pukaiyilai Viṭu Tūtu*, Madras, 1939.

Swaminatha Iyer, U.V. (Ed.): *Pattup-pāṭṭu*, Firsth Edition, Madras, 1956.

Swaminatha Iyer U.V. (Ed,): *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, Third Edition, 1935.

Tattuvarayar: *Aṭakaṉmuṟai* (Kocika Mutt, Chidambaram).

Tirumular: *Tirumantiram* (Kasi Mutt, Tiruppanantal, 1958).

Tirunarana Ayyengar, K.S.: *Rāmānuja Vaipavam*, 1962.

Tiruttakka Tevar: *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* (Ed.) Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, Madras, 1949.

Tiruvalluvar: *Tirukkuṟal with Parimēlaḻakar Urai* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1964).

- *Tiruvevvaḷūr Mahātmyam* (Mārkkaṇḍeya-purāṇam, 1966).

Tolkappiyar: *Tolkāppiyam–Poruḷatikāram* with commentaries of Ilampūranar, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, Pērāciriyar (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras-1).

Varadaraja Iyer. E.S.: *History of Tamil Literature* (1-1100 A.D) (Annamalai University, 1957).

Vedanta Desika: *Haśtigiri Mahātmyam* with Tamil commentary by M.M. Cetlūr Narasimhacarya (Nigama Parimalam Office, Triplicane. Madras, 1933).

Vedanta Desika: *Tecikap-pirapantam* (Ed.) with commentaries by Sri Rama Desikan, (Kumbakonam, 1958).

Vellaivaranan, K.: *Paṉṉiru Tirumuṟai Varalāṟu* Part I (First seven Tirumurais), Annamalai University, 1962.

Venkatachari and Smith: *Pāñcarātra Nūl Viḷakkam* (Hoe & Co., Madras. 1967).

2. MĀNIPRAVĀḶA WORKS

Anantacarya, K. (Ed.): *Satsampradāya Muktāvali*, Madras, 1914.

- *Bhagavad Viṣayam* (in Volumes) Kanchi, 1881. This works consists of
  a. Ārayirap-paṭi by Piḷḷāṉ
  b. Eighteen Thousand by Periyaparakālaswami.
  c. Twenty-four Thousand by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi.
  d. Nine Thousand by Raṅgarāmānujaswāmi.
  e. Pratipatam by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi.
  - Bhagavad Viṣayam (Sundapalayam Edition Vols. I to III. 1912). This work consists of
  a. Ārayirap-paṭi by Piḷḷāṉ
  a Twenty-four Thousand by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi
  c. Pratipatam by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi.

Kitampi Rangacarya Swami : *Guruparamparā Prapāvam*. 1888.

Periyaparakālaswāmi : *Nigamaparimalam on Periya Tirumoli with Parakāla Hrdayam* of Cetlur Narasimhacarya (Nigama Parimalam Office, Madras).

Piḷḷai Lokācāryar : *Arthapañcakam* (Sri P.B.A. Edition, Kanchi).

Piḷḷai Lokācāryar : *Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam* (Sri P.B.A. Edition, Kanchi).

Piḷḷai Lokācāryar : *Tattvatrayam* (Sri P.B A. Edition).

Pinpaḷakiya Perumāl Jīyar : *Guruparamparā Prapāvam*, 1880.

- *Tiruppāvai* with commentaries of Periyaparakāla Swāmi, Ranganāthaswāmi and Raṅgarāmānujamuni.

- *Tiruppallāṇṭu Vyākyānam*, (Kāñchipuram, 1909).

Vedānta Deśika : *Patinoru Cillarai Rahasyankal* (in two volumes) (Ed.) A. Srinivasa Raghavan, Pudukkottai, 1937.

Vedānta Deśika : *Patinelu Rahasyangal* (Sri Niketa Press, Madras, 1900).

Vedānta Deśika : *Rahasyatrayasāram*, (Kumbakonam, 1911).

TELUGU WORKS

Potana, B. *Mahābhāgavatamu* (Published by Chandar Narayana Sresti Book-sellers and Publishers, General Bazaar, Secundarabad, 1954).

Vedamu Venkatakrishna Sarma (Ed.): *Sataka Vānmaya Sarvaśvamu* (Sayanas Printers. Madras-21, 1954).

SANSKRĪT WORKS

Anantacharya, V. and Srinivasaraghavan, A. : *Bhagavan nāmasahasram* (Bombay, 1931).

Anantacharya, V. (Ed.) - *Rāmānuja's Nitya and Vaṅgivaṁśeśvara's Āhnikakārikā* (Hoe & Co., Madras).

Abhinavagupta : *Abhinavabhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra*, Vol. I. (G.O. Series, Baroda).

Āndhra Pūrṇa : *Yatirāja Vaibhavam* (Printed along with *Sri Sannidhi Guruparamparai* by Komandur Anantacaryar, Vanibhusanam Press, Triplicane, Madras, 1914).

Annangaracharya, P.B. (Ed) : *Bhagavad Rāmānuja Granthamālā* (Sannidhi Street, Kanchipuram, 1941).

Annangaracharya, P.B. (Ed.) : *Stotraratnamālā* (Sannidhi Street, Kanchi, 1942). This work consists of:

a) Yāmunācārya : *Catuśśloki*
b) Yāmunācārya : *Stotraratnam*
c) Ramānuja : *Śaraṇāgatigadya*
d) Rāmānuja . *Śrirangagadya*
e) Rāmānuja : *Vaikunṭhagadya*
f) Kūrattālvān : *Śrī Vaikunthastava*
g) Kūrattālvān : *Atimānuṣastva*
h) Kūrattālvān : *Sundarabāhustava*
i) Kūrattāluān : *Varadarajastava*
j) Kūrattālvān : *Śristava*
k) Parāśarabhaṭṭa : *Śri Rangarājastava*
l) Parāśarabhaṭṭa : *Śrī Guṇaratnakośa*
m) Parāśarabaṭṭa : *Aṣṭaśloki*
n) Āndhrapūrṇa : *Rāmānujastotra*
o) Maṇavālamāmuni : *Yatirājavimśati*
p) Vādhūla Varadanārāyaṇa : *Śrī Parāṅkuśāpañcavimśati* and
q) Abhirāmavarada : *Nakṣatramālikā*

Annangaracharya, P.B. (Ed.) : *Vedānta Deṣika Granthamālā*, Kanchipuram

Āpastamba : *Dharmasūtra with Haradatta's commentary* (Oriental Library series, Mysore, 1898).

: *Atharvaveda-saṃhitā*.

: *Atri-saṃhitā* (T.T.D. Publication, Tirupati; 1943).

Bāṇa : *Harṣacaritam*, Fifth Edition, (N.S. Press, Bombay, 1925).

: *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā* (Venkateswara Steam Press, Bombay, 1884).

Bhodāyana : *Dharmasūtra with Govindaswāmi's bhāṣya* Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1934).

– *Bhṛgu-saṃhitā* (T.T.D. Publicatian. 1953).

- *Bṛhadbrahma-saṃhitā* (Anandasma's series, Poona, 1912).

Devadhār, C.R. (Ed.) : *Bhāsanāṭakacakra*, Poona Oriental Book House, Poona, 1937.

Empar Krishnamacharyar (Ed.) : *Jayākyasaṃhitā* (Gaekward Oriental Series, Baroda. 1931).

Gaṅgādevi : *Mathurā Vijayam* (Ed.) with English Translation by S. Thiruvenkatachari (Annamalai University).

Garudavāhana Paṇḍita : *Divyasūri Caritam* (Ed.) P.B. Annangaracharya (Kanchipuram, 1953).

Govindāchārya (Ed.) : *Pārameśwara-saṃhitā* (Sri Rangam, 1953).

Hiraṇyakeśin : *Gṛhyasūtra* (Ed.) J. Kriste, (Vienna, 1889).

- *Īśvara-saṃhitā* (Sastra Muktavali Series; Kanchi).

Itihāsasamuccaya (Venkateswara Steam Press, Bombay, 1916).

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa *Nyāyamañjarī* (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1936).

- *Jitante Stotram* with Periyavāccān Pillai's commentary and two other Tamil Commentaries Madras, 1958.

- *Kāśyapajñāna kāṇḍa* (T:T.D. Publication, Tirupati, 1948).

Kauṭilya : *Arthaśāstra.*

- *Kṛṣṇayajurveda-saṃhitā.*

Krisnamacharya, V. (Ed.), *Lakṣmītantram* wiih commentaries and introduction. Adyar Library, Madras).

Krishnamacharya, V. (Ed.) : *Puruṣa-sūktabhāṣya* with the commentary of Ranganāthamuni, (B.S. and F. Mart, Madras, 1955).

Krishnamacharya, V. (Ēd.) *Viṣṇusmṛti* (Adyar Library, Madras. 1964).

Krishnamacharya, V. (Fd.) : *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā* 2 volumes (Adyar Library, Second Edition, 1966).

- *Mānavagṛhyasūtra* (Gaekward's Oriental Series, Baroda, 1926).

- *Manusmṛti* with Kallūkabhaṭṭa's Commentary (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1936).

- *Marīci-saṃhitā* (Tirupati. 1926).

Krishnaswami Ayyengar, S. (Ed.) : *Paramasaṃhitā*, (Oriental Institute Baroda, 1940).

Meghanādāri : *Nayadyumaṇi* (Ed.) V. Krishnamacharya and T. Viraraghavacharya (Madras Government Oriental Manuscript Library, 1956).

- *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras.*

- *Nāradā Pañcarātra* otherwise known as *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā* (Bibliotheka Indica, Calcutta 1861).

- *One Hundred and Eight Upaniṣads,* Fourth Edition, (N.S. Press, Bombay, 1932).

- *Pādma-Saṃhitā* (Sadvidya Press, Mysore, 1891).

- *Pādmottaram.*

Pāṇini : *Aṣṭādhyāyīā* (Venkateswara Steam Press, Bombay, 1899).
- *Paramapuruṣa-saṃhitā.*

Parāśara : *Viṣṇu-purāṇam* - Text with Hindi Translation (Gita Press, Gorakpur. 1942).

Pāraskara : *Gṛhyasūtra* (Kasi Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1926).

Patañjali : *Mahābhāsya*, Kasi, 1886.

Rāmanuja : *Gadyatraya* with commentary of Periyavāccān Pillai,, Madras.

Rāmānuja : *Vedārthasaṅgraha* with *Tātparyadīpīkā* of Sudarśanasūri, Reprint from the Pandit, Second Edition. Banaras, 1924.

Rāmānuja : *Vedārthasaṅgraha* with English Translation by S.S. Raghavachar (Sri Ramakrishna Asramam, Mysore, 1956).

Ramaswami Bhaṭṭar, K. (Ed.) : *Śrī Praśnaśaṃhitā.* Kumbakonam.

- *Rg Veda-saṃhitā*, with Sāyaṇa's bhāsya Vols. I to V Vaidika Samśodhana Maṇḍal, Poona 1933-1951.

- *Sāmaveda-saṃhitā.*

- *Śāṇḍilya Bhakti Sūtrās*

- *Śāṇḍilya-saṃhitā* (Sarasvati Bhavani Texts, Benaras, 1936).

- *Śāṇḍilya-smṛti.*

Śaṅkara : *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya* (N.S. Press, Bombay .

Śaṅkara : *Viṣṇusahsranāma-bhāśya* (Mysore Oriental Research Institute, 1960).

-*Smṛti Sandharbha* Vols. I and II (Calcutta. 1931) consisting of *Hāritasmṛti Saṁkhasmriti, Vyāsasmṛti, Auśanasismṛiti, Dakṣasmṛti, Vṛddhāritasmṛti*, and *Śatātapasmṛti.*

- *Śatapatha Brāhmana* Vol I and II Acyuthagrantamalā, (Kasi, 1938, 1942).

- *Śāttvata-saṃhitā* (Sastra Muktavali Series, Kanchi. 1902).

Somadeva : *Kathāsaritsāgara* (N.S. Press. Bombay).

Śrīnivāsadāsa ; *Yatindramatadīpikā* with English Translation and notes by Swami Adidevananda (Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Madras-4. 1949).

Srinivasa Ayyengar, A. (Ed.) : *Aniruddha-saṃhitā* (Mysore, 1956).

Srinivasanarasimhacharya (Ed.) : *Prappannāmṛtam* (Sri Venkateswara Steam Press. Bombay, 1886),

Śuklayajurveda-saṃhitā.

- *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka,*

Utpala: *Spandapradīpikā.*

Vaidyanātha Dīkṣita: *Smṛtimuktaphala Ahnika Kāṇḍa* II.

Vālmīki: *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam* (Law Journāl Press, Madras, 1933).

Vālmīki: *Rāmāyana* with the commentary Tilaka, Fourth Edition, (N.S. Press, Bombay, 1930).

Vedānta Deśika: *The Stotras* (Sri Vedanta Desikasampradaya Sabha. Bombay, 19).

Vedānta Deśika: *Pañcarātrarakṣā* (Ed.) M. Duraiswami Ayyengar and T. Venugopalacharya (Adyar Library, 1942).

Vedānta Deśika: *Saṅkalpasūryodaya* Vols. I and II (Ed.) Pandit V. Krishnamacharya with commentaries and Sanskrit introduction (Adyar Library, Madras).

Vedānta Deśika: *Adhikaraṇasārāvali* (Ahobila Mutt, Tiruvallur, 1940).

- *Viṣṇudharmottaram* (Venkateswara Steam Press. Bombay, 1891)

Vyāsa: *Agnipurāṇam* (Bibliotheka Indica, Calcutta, 1874)

Vyāsa: *Bhāgavatam* with Śrīdhara's commentaries, (Kumbakonam, 1916).

Vyāsa: *Bhāgavatam* (Text only), (Gita Press, Gorakpur, 1943).

Vyāsa: *Garuḍapūrāṇam* (Belgaum, 1905).

Vyāsa: *Harivaṃśam*. Poona. First Edition. 1936.

Vyāsa: *Kūrmapurāṇam* (Ed.) Pañcānanatarka of Bhattapalli.

Vyāsa: *Liṅgapurāṇam* (Venkateswara Steam Press, Bombay, 1903).

Vyāsa: *Mahābhāratam* Parva (1 to 18) (Ed.) T.R. Krishnamacharya and T.R Vyasachary (Madhva Vilas Book Department, Kumbakonam 1906-1910).

Vyāsa: *Nāradīya purāṇam.*

Vyāsa: *Pādmapurāṇam* Vols. 1 to VI (Anandasrama Series, Poona, 1894).

Vyāsa: *Vāmanapurāṇam.*

Vyāsa: *Varāhapurāṇam* (Bibliotheka Indica, Calcutta, 1893).

Vyāsa: *Vāyupurāṇam* (Venkateswara Steam Press, Bombay. 1895).

- *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (N.S. Press, Bombay, 1936).

yāska: *Nirukta* (Ed.) Laksman sarup, Lahore, 1924.

Yāmuna : *Catuśśloki*, *Stotraratnam* or *Ālavantārstotram*, *Gītārtha-saṅgraham* with commentaries of Vedānta Deśika (Ed.) P.B. Annangaracharya, Kanchi.

Yāmuna : *Āgamaprāmāṇya* (Mathura, 1936).

Yadugiri Yatirāja Sampatkumāra Rāmānujamuni (Ed) : *Pauṣkara-saṃhitā* (Mysore, 1934).

5. SANSKRIT AND HINDI

Parāṅkuśa Ācārya : *Sahaśragīti* (Mathura, 1936).

6. ENGLISH WORKS

Alexis Carrel : *Man the Unknown* (Penguin Books, New York, U S.A.)

Barnett, L.D. : *Hindu Gods and Heroes* (London, 1922).

Belvalkar, S K. : *Vedānta Philosophy*, (Poona, 1929).

Betrand Russel : *History of Western Philosophy* (George, Allen & Unwin, Fifth impression, 1967).

Bhandarkar. R.G. : *Vaiṣṇavism, Saiviśm and Minor Religious Systems* (1928).

Bloomsfield, M. : *The Religion of the Veda* (1908).

Chatterjee, J.C. : *Kashmir Saivism.*

Chelliah, J V. : *Pattup-pāṭṭu* (Translation) First Edition (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1962).

Clive Bell : *What is civilisation* ? forming part of Current Thought, edited by K.R. Chandrasekharan, Macmillan and Company, Madras, 1967.

Dasgupta, S. : *A History of Indian Philosophy* Vol. II (1961) Vol. III (1952) Cambridge. University Press.

Deshmukh, P.S. : *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* (1933).

Dikshitar. V.R.R. : *The Silappadikāram* (English Translation). Oxford University Press, Madras, 1939.

Dikshitar, V.R.R. : *Studies in Tamil Literature and History.*

Dorai Arangaswami. M.A. : *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram* (in 2 volumes), Madras University, 1959.

Gopinatha Rao, T.A. : *History of Vaiṣṇvās*, Madras University, (1923).

Govindacharya, A. : *Rāmānuja's Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya* (English Translation).

Govindacharya, A. : *The Divine Wisdom of Saints* (1902).

Hari Rao, V.N. : *Kōil Olugu* (English Translation), Rochouse, Madras, 1961.

Hari Rao, V.N. : *Śrīraṅgam Temple* (Sri Venkateswara University, 1967).

Hawkins, D.J.B. : *The Essentials of Theism* (Sheed and Ward, London, 1949).

Hazra : *Studies in the Upapurānas* Vols. I and II (Calcutta Sanskrit College, 1958).

Hill, Douglas, P. : *The Bhagavadgītā* - An English Translation and Commentary, Second Edition, (Oxford University Press, 1966).

Hiriyanna, A. : *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1956.

Hooper, J.S.M. : *Hymns of the Ālvārs* (Association Press. Calcutta, 1929).

Hodkins, E.W. : *Great Epic of India*.

Hopkins, E.W. : *Religions of India*.

Hume, R.E. : *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (Tr.) London, Oxford University Press, 1954.

James . Bissett Pratt. : *The Religious Consciousness* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1959).

James Collins : *God in Modern Philosophy* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959).

Jesudasan, C. : *A History of Tamil Literature* (Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 6, Russel Street, Calcutta-16).

Kanakasabai, V. : *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Second Edition, (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1956).

Keith, A B. : *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads* (in two volumes). (The Harvard Oriental Series Vols. 31 and 32, 1925).

Krishnaswami Ayyengar, S. : *A History of Early Vaiṣṇavism in South India*, Madras University, 1920.

Kumarappa, B. : *The Hindu Conception of the Deity as culminating in Rāmānuja* (Gay Luzac & Co., London, 1934).

Kurattalvar Ayyengar, N. : *A Free Translation of Tiruvāymoḷi of Sathakopa* (Tiruchirapalli, 1925).

Macdonell, A.A. : *A Vedic Reader* (Oxford University Press, Madras, 1951).

Macdonell, A.A. : *Vedic Mythology*.

Macdonell, A.A. : *History of Sanskrit Literature*.

Max Muller : *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Allahabad, 1926.

Mahadevan, T.M.P. : *Outlines of Hinduism* (Bombay. 1956).

Manickam, V.Sp. : *The Tamil Concept of Love in Ahattiṇai* (The SISSWP. Society Ltd., Madras, 1962).

Meenakshisundaram, T.P. : *A History of Tamil Literature*, Annamalai University, 1965.

Meyer : *Sexual Life in Ancient India.*

Mir Valiuddin : *Love of God* (Motilal Benarassidas, Delhi, 1968).

Murti, T.R.V.: *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1955).

Swami Tyagisanand (Ed) : *Narada Bhaktisutras* (1955).

Narayanaswami Iyer, K : *Brahma Vidyas* (Adyar Library Series No. 90, 1962),

Nilakanta Sastri, K.A : *The Cōḷas* Vols. I, II and III (Madras University, 1935).

Nilakanta Sastri, K.A. : *Development of Religion in South India* (The Orient Longmans Ltd., Madras, 1963).

Nilakanta Sastri. K.A. : *A History of South India*, Second Edition, (Oxford University Press, 1958).

Nilakanta Sastry, K.A. : *History of India*, Part I, Ancient India, Second Edition, (S. Viswanathan, Madras, 1953).

Pringle-Pattison-A Seth : *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philoso-Phy*, Second Edition, Revised, Oxford University Press, London, 1967.

Purnalingam Pillai, M.S. : *Tamil Literature.*

Purnendra Narayana Sinha : *A Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇam*, Second Edition, (Adyar Library, 1953).

Raja, K.K. : *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature* (Madras University, 1958).

Ramaswami Ayyengar, D. : *Peeps into Mysticism*, Madras, 1962.

Raychaudhuri, H.C. : *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaisnava Sect* (Calcutta University, 1936).

Radhakamal Mukerjee : *The Theory and Art of Mysticism* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1960).

Radhakrishnan, S. : *An Idealist View of Life*, Second Edition (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.. London, 1947).

Radhakrishnan, S. : *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* Second Edition, (Oxford University Press, Great Britain, 1940).

Schrader, O F. : *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudnya Saṃhitā* (Adyar Library, 1916).

Siddesvara Bhattacharya : *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Vol. I, Metaphysics - Visvabhārati - Santiniketan. 1960.

Sircar, D.C. : *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I.

Sorensen, S. : *Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata* (Reprinted 1963), (Motilal Banarasidas Delhi).

Srinivasachari, P.N. : *Idea of Personality* (Adyar Library, 1951).

Srinivasachari, P.N. *Rāmānuja's Idea of the Finite Self* (Longmans, Calcutta, 1929).

Srinivasachari. P.N. : *Mystics and Mysticism* (Sri Krishna Library, Madras, 1951).

Srinivasachari. P.N. : *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, Madras, 1942.

Srinivasachari, P.N. : *A Synthetic View of Vedanta* (Adyar Library, 1952).

Srinivasachari, P.N. : *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita* (Adyar Library, 1946).

Srinivasa Ayyengar, P T. : *History of Tamils* from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D. (C. Coomaraswamy Naidu & Sons, Madras, 1929).

Srinivasa Ayyengar, M, : *Tamil Studies*, Madras. 1908.

Swami Ramakrishnananda : *Life of Rāmānuja* (Srī Ramakrishna Mutt, Mylapore, 1959):

- *The Cultural Heritage of India* Vol. IV. (Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta. 1956).

Tripathi, R;S. : *History of Ancient India*, Second Edition, (Motilal Banarasidas, 1960).

Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. : *A History of Tamil Language and Literature* (New Century Book House, 1956).

Varadachari, K.C. : *Āḻvārs of South India* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1966).

Varadachari, V. *A History of the Samskṛta Literature* (1960).

Varadarajan, M. : *The Treatment of Nature in the Ancient Tamil Literature* (The SISSWP: Society Ltd., Madras, 1957).

Vedanta Desika : *Śrīmad Rahasya Trayasāra* (Translated into English by M R. Rajagopala Ayyengar) Kumbakonam, 1956.

Wilson, A.H : *The Viṣṇu-purāṇa* Third Edition, (Punithi Pustak, Calcutta-4).

Winternitz, M. : *History of Indian Literature* Vol: I (Calcutta University, 1927).

Yamunacarya, M., *Rāmānuja's Teachings in His Own Words* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963).

7. TAMIL AND FRENCH

Dessiganne, R.: *Tiruppāvai Text and French Translation* (Pondicherry, 1952).

8 (a) MANUSCRIPTS

(Available from S.V.U.O.R. Institute, Tirupati).

Accan : *Tiuvāymoḷi Piratipatam* (Stock No. 1109).

Alakiyamanavalap-perumal Nayanar : *Tiruppāvai Vyākyānam* (Stock No, 589).

Appan : *Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 5113 (b)).

Appilai : *Iyarpā Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 649).

Gopala : *Tiruppallāṇṭu Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 2145 (a)).

Gopaladasa : *Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 2145 (b)).

Gopaladesika : *Tiruppallāṇṭu Vyākhyānam* (Stock Nos. 1530 (a), 5655 (a)).

Manavalamamunikal : *Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 341?).

- *Nārada-samhitā* (Stock No. 552).

Parakalaswami : *Ārāyīrap-paṭi Guruparamparā* (Stock No. 868).

Ramanuja Jīyar : *Tiruvāymoḷi Piratipatam* (Stock No. 992),

Ranganatha : *Tiruppāvai Vyākhyānam Ārāyirappaṭi* (Stock No. 4619).
- *Śrīdhara-saṃhitā* (No. 3528 D).

Vangipurattaccan : *Tiruppallāṇṭu Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 1126 (a)).

Vangisa : *Tiruppallāṇṭu Vyākhyānam* (Stock No. 3527 (a)).
- *Viṣvakśena-saṃhitā* (Stock No. 4344).

8 (b) MANUSCRIPTS

(Available in the Madras Government Oriental Manuscript Library)

- *Ananda-saṃhitā* (D.No. 14758)
- *Hiraṇyagarbha-saṃhitā* (R.No. 2614)
- *Upēndra-saṃhitā* (R.No. 5209)
- *Viṣṇurahasya-saṃhitā* (R.No. 5852)

8 (c) MANUSCRIPTS

(Available in the Adyar Library, Madras)

– *Saunaka-saṃhitā* (No. 569)

– *Viṣṇu-tattva* (No. 29 L.7).

9. JOURNALS AND REPORTS

Annangaracharya, P.B. : *Rāmānujan* (No. 209).

Epigraphic Indica Vols. II, X and XV.

Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Madras, 1944.

Proceedings and Transactions af the Second Oriental Conference, Calcutta, 1923.

Protdar, M.M : *Commemoration Volume* (Article : *New Light on Later Pallava Chronology* by Sri K.A. Nilakanta Sastri).

Sovenir, Tirumāl Tiruṇeṛi Maṉram, Pondicherry 1966 (Article : *Satsanga in Vaisnavism*).

Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sudarśanam (containing Dūṣananirvasa by the Editor K. Srinivasa Ayyengar, Tennur Agraharam, Tiruchirappalli).

10. DICTIONARIES AND LEXICONS

– *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu*

Dikṣitar. V.R.R. *The Purāṇa Index* (in 3 volumes), Madras University, 1951.

– *Kalaikkalañciyam* (Tamil Valarcci Kaḻakam).

Parthasarathi Ayyengar : *Nālāyira Tivya Pirapanta Akarāti.* (Sri Rangam).

– *Piṅkalantai.*

– *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras University).

APPENDIX – IX

INDEX

Ācāryas – Āḷavantār, 695, 829, 844; Maṇakkāl Nampi, 695, 708; Nāthamuni, 695, 700–04; Periya Mudaliyār, 716; Periya Nampi, 716; Piḷḷailokacaryār, 696; Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi, 718; Tirumalai Nampi, 716; Uyyakkoṇḍār, 695, 704; Yāmuna, 709, 863-64, 870, 875, contributions of 710–13

Aesthetics, 16

Aiśvarya, 372

Āgamās, 14, 20, 21, 90, 91, 99, 107, 109, 112, 116, 163, 272

Agastia, 869

Ajāmila,

Akanāṉūṟu, 140

Akattiṇai, concept of 453–54,

Alakarmalai, 149

AḶAKIYAMAṆAVĀḶA JĪYAR, 695,

AḶAKIYAMAṆAVĀḶA PERUMĀḶ NĀYAṆĀR, 445, 774

ĀḶAVANTĀR ĀḶVĀR, 715

ALEXIS CARREL, 3

Āḷvār, 7, 10; Āṇṭāḷ, 189–92, 240–44; Kulacēkara Āḷvār, 182–83, 635–39, Maturakavi, 192, 244–46, 661–70; Mutalāḷvār, 174–86; Nammāḷvār, 8, 13, 192–94, 248–61, 277–78, 388–90; Periyāḷvār, 189–92, 236–40, 281, 655-61; Peyāḷvār, 282; Poykai Āḷvār, 282; Pūtaṭāḷvār, 738, 741; Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār, 177–79, 626–31; Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār, 185–89, 227-34, 283, 640–55; Tiruppāṇāḷvār, 640; Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār, 180–82, 631–35.

Amalattuva, 14

AMMAṄKI AMMĀL, 746, 835

Ānanda, 7, 293

ANANTĀLVĀṆ, 681, 696, 736, 741.

Antaryāmin, 321-24

Āpasthamba, 30

Āraṇyaka, Taittirīya, 158

Ārāyirappaṭi, 818

Arcā, 136, 166, 324, 339

Aricamaya Dīpam, 697.

Arta Pañcaka, 865

Aṣṭādhyāyee, 154.

Aṣṭākṣara, 168

Aṭiyārs, 559

Ātippiraṉ, 355

Ātman, 346, nature of 346-51, as bride 444

ĀTREYA RĀMĀNUJA, 754

Bagavad-Viṣayam, 846

Balarāma, 148

Baudhāyana Dharma-sūtra, 161

Bhāgavatas, 108, 126, 163, cult of ch. XXVII, 553-578, 860, service to 563; Āgamās' support to 564, *apacāra*, 570, of low caste 571-72

Bhakti 104, as *upāya* 386, origin of cult of 123, definition of 125, different modes of 532-36, *sādhaga bhakti* 386, *bhaktirūpa jñāṉam* 386, *madhura bhakti* 456

BHAKTISĀRA, 177

Bhaktisūtras, 21, 138; of Nārada 21, 12?, 139; of Sāṇḍilyā 21, 122

BHĀSKARA 819

Brahman 13; Vedantic concept of 14; Narayana with Sri 282.

Brahma-sūtras 687, 689, 716, 815, 863

Brāhmaṇas 19, 29; *Satapātha* 28, 29, 30, 91, 94, 158; *Kausītaki* 287

Bridal Mysticism, ch. XX (442-83), 849-55; interpretation in terms of *Tirumantiram* 457; in terms of *Tiruviruttam* 460-68, 477-78; in terms of *Tiruvāyamoḷi* 468-77; sending messages 480-82.

CANDRAGIRI AYYAN 835

Carama-ślōka 605; meaning and explanation of 605-09.

Cāttumaṟai 803

CĒKKIḶĀR 554

CHATTERJI, J.C. 49

Cilappatikāram 441

Citralēka 653

Civajñānapōtam 378

CIVAJÑĀNAYŌKIKAḶ 378

Civapuṇṇiyam 378

COMĀCIYĀṆṬĀN 753

Copernican theory 580

Dayā 305-06, 372, 787

Dayā-sataka 757

Devotees (aṭiyārs) 554; characteristics of 556; Cēkkiḷār's tribute to 554; Piḷḷilōkācārya's statement of 556; Nāmmāḷvār's terms of 558-59; worship of aṭiyārs in Saivism 564; reverential feelings towards, 565; Kulacēkara's opinion about 565; Cuntaramūrti's view 565; Vaiṣṇavite Commentator's view 566; greatness of devotees according to Āḷvārs 567-68; aspiration of a devotee 568

Devotion 127

Dharma Sāśtras 21, 31, 73, 84, 108, 134-35, 138

DHRUVA 7

Divine Grace 373, 609; punishment also has 358; operation of 374; termed as tiruvaruḷ 375; according to Civajñāna Yōgikal 378; Āḷvārs' praise of 380; three *mantaras* in 609.

Divine Love, 449

Divyasūricarita 174, 201, 697

DRĀMIDA 851

Dvayamantra 604, meaning and explanation of 604-05; 705, 827, 831, 842

Eighteen Thousand 839

Ekāntins 108

EMPĀR 696, 744, 818

EMPERUMĀNĀR 744, 835

ENKALĀḶVĀN 753

Ettuttokai 21

God – 11, Ontological Beyond 16; ethically Perfect 16; five-fold forms of 20, 113, 308-327, 371; according to *Pāñcarātra* 99-102; auspicious form of 290-291; six auspicious qualities of 294-296; six ontological attributes of 291-293; other auspicious qualities of 299-306, 417; Supremacy of 305; three functions of 351; as sarīrī-361; as Ruler, 362, 363; relation of soul to 366; endless glories of 368-370; as 'Hounds of Heaven'-373; soul-hunger of 373; as *Dayā-nidhi*, 374; as medicine, 380; His entry to Nammāḷvār 399-400; Nammāḷvār's communion with, 401-402; Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's communion with 402; as bridegroom-444; in *Pralaya* state, 452; inability to conceive 487-488; as *Siddhōpāya*, 586; as *Sādhyōpāya* 587, 606

God-experience - of Nammāḷvār 407-409, 410-412, 414-417; 458-460; of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār 410, 413-414; God-head 15, 277; dual-self of Lakṣimī-Nārāyaṇa 611-613; God-hunger 7, 14; Periyāḷvār's 392; Nammāḷvār's 392; Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's 393.

God-love 385; Nammāḷvār's 387, 418; development of 390

God-realization 1, 5, 6, 385, 387

God-vision 5

Guruparamparās, 173, 184, 696, 708, 722, 800, 817, 853, 863

Guruparamparā-Prabhāvam 724

'Hound of Heaven', 373

ILAYAPERUMĀḶ 716-17

Incarnation 14; concept of christian theology 14

Indian culture, 876

IRĀPPATTU, 801

ĪŚVARAMUṆI 681

Iṣvara 364; as *śeṣi* 364; as *upāya* 585

Ithihāsas, 39; *Ramayana* 40, 52; *Mahabhārata* 40, 90, 121, 140, 155, 161 553; *Harivamsa* 71, 161

Ithihāsa Samuccaya, 57

ĪYUṆṆI PADMANĀBHA 875

Jitānta śtotra 119

Jñāna, 6; explanation according to Āḷvārs 599-600

Jīva 382

Kaiṅkarya 259, 531, 552, 766, 858, 859, 875

Kaiṅkarya rasa, 583

Kaivalya 793-795

KĀLIDĀSA 162

Kalittokai 140, 559

Kalpa-sūtras 135, 859

KALIVAIRI DĀSA, 669

Kāma: Ātma-kāma, 449; Viṣaya-kāma 129, 165, 448, 449, 453. 485; Bhagat-kāma 165, 448, 449

Karpakam, 384

Kāruṇya 383

Kaṭṭiyam, 700

Kāṭṭumaṉṉār Koil, 200

Karma 4, 6, 15, 375; niṣkāma 84; doctrine of 355; Āḷvār's terminology of 356–357; Nammāḷvār's view of 380–381; tyranny of 404–405

Karma-Yajña 111

Karma-Yōga 546

KEITH, 2

KIṬĀMPI ĀCCAṆ, 696, 742, 760, 818, 829, 844

KŌNERI TĀSYAI, 698

Kṛṣna-prema 454

Kṛṣna-Traṣna-Tattuvam 390; Nammāḷvār's *tattuvam* 392

KSHATRABANDU 516

KŪRATTĀḶVĀṆ 723, 737–41, 830, 833, 875

KURUKAIK-KĀVALAPPAṆ, 706

LOKASĀRAṄKAMUṆI 184

MAC DOUELL, A.A. 33

Mahābhārata 40, 90, 121, 140, 155, 161, 162, 553

Maitrēyī 597–98

MĀLĀKĀRA, 715

MAṆAKKĀL NAMPI 708, 859

MAṆAVĀḶAMĀMUṆIKAḶ 775–778. 841

Manoyajña 111

Mārkandēya 160, 682

MĀṆIKKAVĀCAKAR 527

Manuśmṛuti 135

Maṭalūrtal 470, 652, 743

Matinalam 388

Mōkṣa 90, 502; Nammaḷvar's idea of 584–85; ascent of the soul to, 587

Mukti, 583; as celkati, 586; as mākkati 586; explanation of 615–620; state of soul in 619, 865–66

Mukuntamāla, 183

Mūlamantra 603; Praṇava in 603–604

Munivāhaṉar 184, 716

MUTALIYĀNDĀṆ 696, 818, 830

NACCINĀRKIṆIYAR 559

Naicciyānusandāna 4

NAINĀRĀCĀR 767

NAIṆĀR ĀCCĀṆ PIḶḶAI 770, 827

Nālāyiram–Commentators of 445; as Dravida Veda, Chap. XXVI 680–693

NĀLŪR PIḶḶAI 845

NAMPIḶḶAI 768, 830

NAÑCĪYAR 382, 768, 861, 863

Nappiṉṉai, 283

Nārāyaṇa, 35; as Supreme Being 36; worship of 158; identified with Tirimūrtti, 278; as Supreme Deity, 280; with Sri 282; description of, 286; exploits of, 399; Periyāḷvār on 337–340; Nammāḷvār on 340–344; with three functions 351

Nārada 129, 131

NAṬĀDŪR AMMĀḶ 753, 754, 835

NĀṬHAMUNI, 152, 200, 202, 685, 695, 700, 833, 856, 870; works of 703–704

Nature–as the very form of God, 510; as the beautiful form of God 511; description of in Caṅkam poetry 424; in Āḷvār's poems 430–437; Nature Mysticism 419, Chap IX 419–441; Nammāḷvār's vision of 420–422; Kampaṉ's vision of 422; Tagore's conception of 422; of Bucke, 423; vision of beauty 424; of Āḷvārs 424–430

Nāyaki–Nāyaka Bhāva 456

Nīla 146

Nine Thousand 818, 821, 822, 824

Nyāsa 105

Nigamanaparimaḷa 844

NIMPĀRKA 875

Pāñcarātra doctrines 94, according to Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār 629

Pacupuṇṇiyam 378

Pakal-pattu 701

Paramēsvara Viṇṇakaram 175

Parācara Paṭṭar 556, 681, 696, 724, 746, 751, 785, 818, 830, 878

Parāṅkusa 379; See Nammāḷvār 833

Pavisāra 853

Paramapada 27, 121, 169, 369, 383

Paramapada Sōpāna 617, 763; nine steps in 617

PARĀṄKUSA NAMPI, 724
PARIMELALAKAR 140, 505
Paripāṭal 140, 148
Paripurṇabrahmānubava 13, 395
PĀRVATI 653
Pāṭalpeṟṟatalaṅkaḷ 864
PATAÑCALI 96
Pattup-pāṭṭu 21
PĒRACIRIYAR 505
PERIYANAMPI 716
PERIYAMUTALIYĀR 716
PERIYA PARAKĀLASVĀMIṆ 698, 820, 844
PERUNTĒVAṆĀR 149
PERIYAVĀCCĀN PIḶḶAI 698, 769, 827, 845
PIḶḶAI AMUTAṆĀR 753
PIḶḶAI LŌKĀCĀRIYĀR 377, 556, 696, 770–774, 821
PIḶḶĀṆ 696, 751, 845, 863
PIḶḶAI TIRUNARAIYŪR ARAIYĀR 696, 743
PIḶḶAIUṞAṄKĀ VILLITĀSAR 753
Pirapanta-cāram 174, 764
Prapannāmrutam 697, 701
Prapanna Gāyatri 207
Prime Person 50
Prapannajatakūtastha 861
Prapatti, 104, 625, 787–88, 862; definition of 106; as upāya, jñāna 106; explanation of 595–96; acc. to Āḷvārs 596-97; cult of 607–608; acc. to Āṇṭāḷ, 665–66; doctrine of 865.
Ptolemic theory 580
Prasthanatrya 77, 699, 755
Purānas 40, 272; Kūrma 40, 129; Liṅga 40; Matsya 40, 690; Vāyu 40; Bhāgavata 75; Viṣṇu 75, 90, 282
Puruṣa 35, 37, 66
Puruṣa-sūkta 35, 94, 161, 500, 503, 800
Puruṣōttama, 97
Rahasyatraya Sāra 762

RĀMĀNUJA CHAP. XXVIII 719-36, 875

Rāmānuja-Nūṟṟantāti 206

RAṄGANĀTHAMUṆI, 698, 839

RAṄGANĀTHASVĀMIṆ 844

Religion 25

Sākuntalam 165

Samhitās, 24, 40; Ahirbudhanya 105; Pāñcarātra, 115; Parama, 108, 109; Vaikhānasa, 112; Taittirīya, 28, 162

SĀNDILYA, 129

SANKARA, 137, 318, 832

Śaranāgati, 105

Sarīra-sarīri bhāva, 367

Satkāryavāta, 352

Sātvata Dharma, 104

Saulabya 299-301, 372, 375, 376

Sausīlya, 302-03, 372

Schools of - Sānkhya, 582; Nyāya, 582; Buddha, 582; Jaina, 582; Bēda Bēda, 583; Suddhātvaita, 583

Self, 615; soul proceeding to Vaikuṇtha, 620-21

Self-realization, 598; three stages of, 598-99

Self-surrender, doctrine of 759

Senses - control of, 404, 485, 529; Nammāḷvār's views of 486; Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār's 486-87

Sēṣa-sēṣi bhāva, 364-67; intuited by Āḷvārs 364-65.

SIRIYA GOVINDHA PERUMĀḶ 724,

SHELLEY, 579

Sins-Atonement of 547-50.

Six Thousand 821

Spiritual marriage 445; Kānta bhāva (*Karpu*) 445; Madhura bhāva (*Kaḷavu*) 445; acc. to catholic theology 447-48

SRĪMAN NĀRĀYAṆA JIYAR, 835.

SRĪRĀMA PIḶḶAI, 752

SRĪSAILAPŪRṆA, 716

Srī Vacana Pūṣaṇam, 377

Srī Viṣṇu Dharma, 378

Sringāra rasa, 165
Srutha-Prakāsika, 758
Supreme Being, 33, 49, 75, 78, 79, 89
Supreme Brahman 97
Supreme Deity, 19, 611
Supreme person, 8, 285, 288, 293, 820
Supreme Ruler, 561
TIRUMALAI NAMPI 716, 829, 845, 859
Tējas 372
TIRUKKAṆṆAMAṄKAI ĀṆṬĀṆ 707
TIRUMĀLAI ĀṆṬĀṆ 715, 817, 861, 863
TIRUKKŌṬṬIYŪR NAMPI 718
Tirukkuṛaḷ 140
TIRUKKŌṬṬIYŪR JĪYAR 835
Tirumañjanam 799
Tirumantiram 456, 601-03, 834; *Praṇava in* 603
Ṭirumoḷi-Tiruvāymoḷi Festival 204
TIRUMŪLAR 179
Tirunatcattirams 577, 799
Tiruppallāṇṭu, problem of 213
TIRUVĀLAṆ, 177
TIRUVAḶḶUVAR 377, 380, 496, 557
TIRUVARAṄKKATTAMUTANĀR 206-07, 448, 671-72
Tiruvāṭi-p-pūram 801
TIRUVĀYMOḶI PIḶḶAI, 775
Tiruvāymoḷi Vācaka Mālai 835
Twelve Thousand 825
Twenty-Four Thousand 827
Ubhaya Vēdānta 693
UDAYANA 234
UDAYANĀCĀRYA 282
Ulūpi 653
Upadēsarattiṉamālai 213

Upaniṣads-8, 13, 19. 67; Aitareya-686; Brihadāranyaka-686; Chāndōgya-36, 124, 154, 287, 586, 679; Katha-287; Maitri-30; Muṇḍaka-36, 686, 791: Svetasvatara-686; Taittirīya-686

UPĀSANA-579

UṢĀ-653

Uruveḷippāṭu 474

Uruveḷittōṟṟam 474

UYYAKKOṆṬĀR, 704

Vaikuntha 617, 618

Vaiṣṇavism, tenets of 22, 33

Vaiṣṇavite Theology 10-11

Vaiṣṇavite Philosophy-19

VALLABA, 875

Vak-yajña-111

Vāḷi Tirunāmam 803

VAṄKIPURATTU NAMPI, 696, 742

Vāsavatattai 234

VAṬAKKUTTIRUVĪTI PIḶḶAI 698, 769, 818, 830, 835, 861

VĀTIKECARI AḶAKIYA MAṆAVĀḶA PERUMĀḶ- 769

VĀTIKECARI AḶAKIYA MAṆAVĀḶA JĪYAR - 841

Vātsalya 273, 303-34, 372, 383, 786

VĀTSYA VARADĀCĀRYA 753, 835

VAṬUKA NAMPI - 735

VĒDĀNTA DĒŚIKA 682, 754. 816, 840, 869, 871

VĒDĀNTA RĀMĀNUJASVĀMIṆ 698, 839

Vēdānta-sūtrās - 871

Vēgavadi - 653

Vedas - 23; Atharva 686; Nālāyiram as Dravida Veda Ch. XXVII 680-93; Rg. Veda 26, 31, 78, 287, 686; Sukla Yajur 686; Krishna Yajur 686; Sāma - 629

Veṟivilakku - 470

Vibhava 312-320

VIPRA NĀRĀYAṆA - 180

Virōda-parikāra 764

Viṣṇu Dharma 72

Viṣṇu Dharma-sāra - 635

Viṣṇu-patha – 27

Viṣṇu Sahasranāma 723

VYĀSA - 853

Vyūha 309-312

Worship 484, *Pāñcarātra* mode 21; *Vaikhānasa* mode 21; act of worship 497; chanting *Puruṣa-sūkta* 500 acc. to Pēyāḷvār 501, 514; Bhakti-sāra 501; Poykai Āḷvār 502, 514, 524; Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār 503-505; mode of worship 504-05; Nammāḷvār's view 505, 574; acc. to Āṇṭāḷ 505; Pūtattāḷvār 505, 506, 513; Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār 506; Kulacēkara Āḷvār 506; as *ārādhana 506;* acc. to *Tēvāram* 506-07; through poetry-506-10; by nature 511-12; recitation of the names of God 512; by chanting of *Vedic* hymns 513; acc. to Periyāḷvār 514; Āḷavantār 515; through music 516; through prayer 517; in the form of music 517; of conversation 518-20; of appeal 521; of supplication 522; by contemplation 530; as *kainkarya* 531-36; by congregational prayer 537-39; acc. to Nammāḷvār 539-40; Kulacēkara Āḷvār 540-41; of weeping 522-27; acc. to Nammāḷvār 524-527; Māṇikkavācakar 527; in the form of yearning 528

YAJÑAVĀLKYA-MAITREYI 597-98

YAJÑAMŪRTI 742

YĀMUNA 709, 863-64, 870, 875; contributions of 710-13

YĀMUNĀCĀRYA 553

YĀTAVA PRAKĀSA 744, 819, 832

Yoga - 6, 599; *Karma* - *yoga* 88, 108, 164, 546, 587, 588, 630; explanation of 587-88; Jñāna - yoga 85, 108, 587, 588; explanation of 588-90; Bhakti - yoga 88, 89, 587, 588; explanation of 590-93; as *parabhakti* 594-95; *aṣṭāṅga* 105, 122.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

		RS. PS.
1.	Muttoḷḷāyira Viḷakkam *Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar*	7—00
2.	Paraṇip-Poḷivukaḷ *Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar*	4—00
3.	Symposium Papers on Tirukkuṛaḷ (Ed.) *Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar*	6—00
4.	Administration and Society in the Carnatic *Dr. K. Rajayyan*	8—00
5.	The Srirangam Temple *Dr. V. N. Hari Rao*	16—50
6.	Inscriptions of Andhra Desa Vol. I *Dr. M. Rama Rao*	17-25
7.	Inscriptions of Andhra Desa Vol. II Part I *Dr. M. Rama Rao*	35—00
8.	A Study of Telugu Semantics *Dr. G. N. Reddy*	4—50
9.	Historical Grammar of Telugu with special reference to old Telugu *Dr. K. Mahadeva Sastry*	20—00
10.	Indian Aesthetics-Music and Dance *Sri K. S. Ramaswamy Sastry*	1—50
11.	Thyagaraja's Prahlada Bhakta Vijayam *Prof. P. Sambamurthy*	7—00
12.	A Study of Telugu Compounds *Dr. J. Suryanarayana*	5—00